

*„DELA“*  

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*“WORKS”*

Aleksandar Tomašević

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Ješa Denegri

„DELA“ ALEKSANDRA TOMAŠEVIĆA 1964–1968.  

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WORKS OF ALEKSANDAR TOMAŠEVIĆ: 1964–1968



Dve samostalne izložbe, obe u kratkom vremenskom rasponu – prva, 1967. u Galeriji Doma JNA i druga, posthumna, 1968. u Galeriji ULUS-a – vratile su Aleksandra Tomaševića na beogradsku umetničku scenu posle dugotrajnog i cenjenog, ali i diskretnog prisustva u pedesetim i šezdesetim godinama prošlog veka, od ranih izložbi crteža 1952. i 1954, redovnih nastupa sa grupom Samostalni (1952-1954) i Decembarskom grupom (1955-1960). Njegova umetnička reputacija u stalnom je usponu, od retrospektive u Umetničkom paviljonu Cvijeta Zuzorić 1980.<sup>1</sup> monografije objavljene 1988.<sup>2</sup>, do zasad poslednjih izložbi u Narodnom muzeju 2000, Galeriji RTS-a 2005, Poklon zbirci Rajka Mamuzića u Novom Sadu 2007, u Galeriji RIMA u Kragujevcu 2010.<sup>3</sup> i u Prodajnoj galeriji „Beograd“ 2017,<sup>4</sup> što Tomaševića definitivno uvodi među izuzetno značajne protagoniste srpske umetnosti u drugoj polovini 20. veka.<sup>5</sup>(...)

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<sup>1</sup> Katalog retrospektivne izložbe *Aleksandar Tomašević 1921-1968, Slike i crteži*, uvodni tekstovi: Stojan Čelić, *Beleške o smrti, životu, putevima ka delu i delu slikara Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Mihailo Vunjak, *Aleksandar Tomašević kao slikar-konzervator*, sa biografijom i bibliografijom, Umetnički paviljon Cvijeta Zuzorić, Beograd, 11. februar – 3. mart 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Monografija *Aleksandar Tomašević*, priredio Vladeta Vojinović u saradnji sa Gordanom Tomašević, Tekstovi: Mila Rajković, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Stojan Čelić, *Bleške o smrti, životu, putevima ka delu i delu slikara Aleksandra Tomaševića*, sa obimnom dokumentacijom, ULUS, Beograd 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Katalog izložbe *Aleksandar Tomašević*, uvodni tekst Ljubice Miljković, Galerija Rima, Kragujevac, oktobar-novembar 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Katalog izložbe *Aleksandar Tomašević*, uvodni tekst Ljubica Miljković, Aleksandar Tomašević, *Nezavršeni simboli iz ateljea na Kosančićevom vencu*, sa biografijom i osnovnom literaturom. Prodajna galerija "Beograd", Beograd, septembar-oktobar 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Ostala osnovna literatura:

Štefka Cobelj, *Umetnički lik Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske, 7, Novi Sad 1971, Lidija Merenik, *Aleksandar Tomašević*, u knjizi *Ideološki modeli: srpsko slikarstvo 1945-1968*, Beopolis, Beograd 2001. i *Umetnost i vlast. Srpsko slikarstvo 1945-1968*, Vujičić kolekcija, Filozofski fakultet, Beograd 2010, Katalog izložbe *Aleksandar Tomašević*, uvodni tekst Nikola Kusovac, Galerija RTS, Beograd 2005, Zoran Pavlović, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića, tradicionalno i moderno*, Politika, Beograd, 11. II 2006. Mileta Prodanović, *Aleksandar Tomašević – put od materije freske do duha Vizantije, Vizantinsko nasleđe i srpska umetnost*, Vizantološki institut SANU, Službeni glasnik, Beograd 2016. Ješa Denegri, *Novo u "ideji prošlosti": geometrija Aleksandra Tomaševića*, *Srpska umetnost 1950-2000. Šezdesete*, Topy, Beograd 2013, ponovo objavljeno u knjizi *Teme srpske umetnosti/Srpska umetnost 1950-2000*, I, Fondacija Kolekcija Trajković, Beograd 2019, Nikola Kusovac, *Aleksandar Tomašević*, u knjizi *Odabrani eseji*, Umetnička galerija "Radionica duše", Beograd 2018.

Među osnovnim podacima Tomaševićeve umetničke biografije, pored onih o studijama slikarstva na Likovnoj akademiji u Beogradu između 1947. i 1952. godine, kao posebno značajan po dalekosežnim posledicama izdvaja se onaj o studijskom boravku na *Ecole nationale superieure des beaux arts* u Parizu 1949. zbog izučavanja tehnike fresko slikarstva. Primenjujući to znanje on je kao jedan od mladih kopista uključen u izvedbu kopija fresaka za izložbu *Srednjovekovna umetnost naroda Jugoslavije* u Parizu 1950. godine. Konzervaciju specijalizuje u Luvru u Parizu 1952-53. i u Kraljevskom institutu za zaštitu kulturnog nasleđa u Briselu 1955.<sup>6</sup> Ali daleko više od sticanja i primene tehničkih znanja, kao i od zaposlenja u Slikarsko-konzervatorskom ateljeu Saveznog instituta za zaštitu spomenika kulture i potom vanrednog profesora na Akademiji primenjenih umetnosti, za Tomaševića je bitna i presudna njegova životna vokacija brige o čuvanju, obnovi i negovanju drevnog domaćeg kulturnog blaga, ali i iznad svega težnja da upravo na dubinskom duhovnom usvajanju tekovina istorijskog kulturnog i umetničkog nasleđa zasnuje sopstveno slikarsko opredelenje.

Iz perioda pripadništva Samostalnim i Decembarskoj grupi Tomašević je ostvario, sudeći po retrospektivi iz 1980, obimnu slikarsku i crtačku produkciju u kojoj je nagovestio svoju osnovnu i potom karakterističnu tematsku i idejnu orijentaciju. Tako se već u *Mrtvoj prirodi sa vazom*, 1954, *Slici I*, 1955, *Peharom i čašom*, 1956, u *Beloj ribi*, 1957, *Vazom iz Peći*, 1957, u *Mrtvoj prirodi*, 1960, i dr. evidentno razabiru svojstva njegovog tadašnjeg i najavljuju smernice razvoja budućeg likovnog jezika. U ovim slikama prevladava tematika mrtvih prirodi, ređe figura i predela (u slikama *Pečka patrijaršija*, 1961, *Ljiljanska fasada*, 1962, *Gračanička priprata*, 1963. i dr) u kojima je primenjena slikarska operacija svođenja do dvodimenzionalne predstave prikazanog motiva. Sliku poima kao autonomnu likovnu tvorevinu bez obzira na njen tematski sadržaj i simboličku projekciju. Motiv je predstavljen krajnje sažeto koloritom kojim odbacuje tonske detalje i koristeći se mestimičnim akcentima čistih boja. Tematikom mrtvih priroda i predela nastavlja se na tekovine domaćeg međuratnog modernizma da bi potom ta tematika bila inovirana na način posleratnog umerenog modernističkog slikarskog poimanja. Geometrizacijom motiva, iako još uvek predstavom predmeta, slika je dovedena gotovo do same granice prelaska u apstrakciju. Povremeno prelazeći tu granicu, sliku će dovesti do ekspresije enformela (u slikama koje će nazvati *Enformel*, I-VIII, 1962-1964),

<sup>6</sup> O Aleksandru Tomaševiću kao slikaru-konzervatoru detaljno Mihailo Vunjak u tekstu iz napomene 1.

ubrzo napustivši ovu kratkotrajnu (anti)slikarsku epizodu. Kada se, posle napuštanja konzervatorskih poslova bude definitivno posvetio jedino pozivu slikara i strasti slikanja vratiće se prvobitnim izvorima i dograditi ih u dva velika ciklusa, oba pod nazivom *Delo*, kao vrhunskih dometa svog ukupnog slikarskog opusa.

Tomaševiću neodložnu unutarnju potrebu da se, nakon dugog vremena proteklog u drugim društvenim i kulturnim obavezama, u potpunosti posveti sopstvenom slikarstvu, Trifunović sagledava pod znakom neminovnog „glasa sudbine“:

„Tomašević je u kratkom vremenskom razdoblju, kao da se žuri da stigne pre smrti, sačinio dva kompletna ciklusa: jedan je dominirao na izložbi u Domu JNA 1967, a drugi na izložbi 1968, koju nije ni video. To su ujedno i dva nova, velika perioda njegove umetnosti“.<sup>7</sup>

Na prvoj od navedenih izložbi, 1967, Tomašević prikazuje ciklus tempera na panelu većinom standardnih formata (50x70 cm, 70x50 cm), pod zajedničkim nazivom *Delo*, nastalom između 1963. i 1966. godine. Forme su čiste geometrijske, izvedene upotrebom lenjira, ali po pravilu nisu strogo „mehaničke“, uklopljene su u složenu kompozicionu sintezu horizontalnih i vertikalnih linija, pravougaonika, kvadrata, trouglova u međusobnom harmoničkom rasporedu. Postupkom tempere na panelu (umesto ulja na platnu) postigao je kompaktnu, blago reljefnu ujednačenu fakturu koja upravo po tome podseća na rapavu zidnu površinu freske. Sâm naziv ovog ciklusa – *Delo* – sa dodatnom šifrom (na primer *Delo 63/1*, *Delo 63/2*, *Delo 63/3* do *Delo 63/54* i sl.) upućuje na otklon od asocijativnog tipa apstrakcije, ali ipak čuva i odaje udaljeno i umetniku neophodno inspirativno polazište u ornamentici slikarstva srednjovekovnih fresaka. Posredi je, dakle, geometrijsko slikarstvo vizuelnog obilja, prefinjenog kolorita, pre u poretku kompozicije tipološki raznolikih oblika, umesto u strukturi identičnih elementarnih jedinica. Nastao u šezdesetim godinama prošlog veka, tadašnji Tomaševićev manuelni geometrizam stoji daleko po strani od obavezne nereferencijalnosti i strukturalne serijelnosti minimalizma i neokonstruktivizma.

Zadržavajući isti naziv – *Delo* – Tomašević od 1966. menja materijal i tehnički po-

<sup>7</sup> Lazar Trifunović, *Glas sudbine Aleksandra Tomaševića*, u knjizi *Od impresionizma do enformela*, Nolit, Beograd 1982.

stupak primenjen u ciklusu radova predstavljenih na drugoj, posthumnoj, samostalnoj izložbi u Galeriji ULUS-a 1968. godine. Kao materijal, sada su korišteni – kako je navedeno u katalogu retrospektive iz 1980. – „drveni geometrijski bojeni elementi“. Elementi u formama kvadrata jedinstvenih ili sastavljenih spojem dvaju trouglova, rombova, pravougaonika različitih veličina, u simetričnim ili asimetričnim odnosima, u čistim bojama (tamno plava, smeđa, crna, bela). U elementima koje zbog olakšavanja tehničkog postupka umetnik ne mora da izvodi sam nego njihovu izradu može da poverava pomoći saradnika. Umesto znanja slikanja, posredi je postupak sklapanja ili spajanja prethodno precizno izrađenih drvenih jedinica. Pored vizuelnog ova dela poseduju i od gledaoca traže i pozivaju ga na taktilnu recepciju, dakle osim primarnog kontakta viđenjem i gledanjem nude se i dodatnom kontaktu dodirrom. Umesto kategoriji slike i disciplini slikarstva, ove umetničke tvorevine pripadaju tipologiji „objekta“, pri čemu se umetnikovo konceptijsko jedinstvo dosledno sprovedeno u ukupnom opusu ispoljava upravo u mogućnosti da u konstrukciji „svetovnog“ objekta sačuva i posreduje suštinu spiritualnog i „sakralnog“ sadržaja i značenja, na temeljnom „iskustvu prošlosti“ zasnovanog izrazito savremenog umetničkog dela. Naglašavajući savremenost Tomaševićevog oblikovnog tipa „slike-objekta“ Zoran Pavlović je čak smatrao da bi „svaka njegova konstrukcija u vidu pseudo reljefa, potencijalno mogla da se rasformira i nanovo sklopi u sasvim drugačijoj konstelaciji“, što se, međutim, u umetnikovoj praksi ipak nije dogodilo budući da je delo ostalo fiksirano u prvobitnom statičkom položaju. Iako se zbog različitih temeljnih kulturnih korena u genezi umetničkog jezika nikada nije upustio u kinetičku i multiplikativnu strukturu sopstvenih objekata, Tomašević se – smatra Pavlović – barem po njihovim spoljašnjim svojstvima donekle približio tada aktuelnoj optičkoj umetnosti:

„njima je, dakle, izvesna standarizacija i repeticija osnovnog elementa obezbeđivala visoki stepen aktuelnosti, te je u formalnom smislu ostvarena neka veza sa vazarelizmom“. <sup>8</sup>

Davno upozorenje Rastka Petrovića upućeno modernim srpskim umetnicima – „dok ne prebolimo Evropu i ne naučimo evropski govoriti nikako nećemo uspeti ni

<sup>8</sup> Zoran Pavlović, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića – tradicionalno i moderno*, Politika, Beograd, 11. februar 2006, ponovo objavljeno u knjizi *Umetnost tumačenja umetnosti*, Fakultet likovnih umetnosti, Plato, Beograd 2009. str. 179-182.

da proniknemo šta je u nama od vrednosti, a kamoli to da izrazimo tako da bude od vrednosti i za sav ostali svet“. <sup>9</sup> – našlo je u delu Aleksandra Tomaševića jedno vrlo konkretno i ubedljivo ostvarenje. Bio je umetnik koji je „prebolio Evropu“ usavršavanjem u Parizu i Briselu, „naučio je evropski govoriti“ svojim slikarskim jezikom u početku upoznatim sa tekovinama kubizma i fovizma, potom lirske i geometrijske apstrakcije. Slikarskim jezikom izrazito modernim i savremenim, zasnovanim na uzorima domaćeg srednjovekovnog nasleđa koje u evropskoj kulturi i umetnosti svoga vremena poseduje jedinstvene i visoke vrednosti univerzalnog značaja. Ideja kontinuiteta i princip evolucije stilskih formacija od drevne do moderne i savremene umetnosti neke su od temeljnih pretpostavki istorijsko-umetničke nauke, shodno poznatoj tvrdnji Đulija Karla Argana po kojoj „istorijski tok svojstven modernoj i savremenoj umetnosti jeste revival koji, naravno, isključuje svaki povratak na staro, ali potvrđuje da se staro ponovo rađa i ostvaruje u modernom“. Da u Tomaševićevom delu nije posredi „povratak na staro“ nego upravo njegovo „ostvarenje u modernom“, potvrđuje Tomaševićev likovni jezik u zreлом periodu doveden do specifične apstrakcije geometrijskih formalnih obeležja, kakva je bila moguća u problemskom kontekstu „posle enformela“ u šezdesetim godinama prošlog veka, kada nastaju i u dve uzastopne izložbe 1967. i 1968. na tadašnjoj beogradskoj umetničkoj sceni predstavljena su oba Tomaševićeva poslednja ciklusa pod istovetnim nazivom *Delo*.

Suštinu Tomaševićevog poduhvata u ovim ciklusima čini se da je najlucidnije zapazio Radomir Konstantinović u sledećoj tvrdnji:

„Tomaševićovo najviše otkriće je besmrtnost simbola: simbol ne umire sa značenjem jer njegova funkcija ne mora biti samo u službi smisla; funkcija simbola je, posle smrti značenja, funkcija muzička i funkcija čisto likovna...“ <sup>10</sup>

Otuda proizlazi da u Tomaševićevim poznim ciklusima, nadahnutim nasleđem srednjovekovne umetnosti, njena tematika nestaje, ali simbolika opstaje sačuvana i saopštena u formama „čiste likovnosti“. Upravo zbog ove „besmrtnosti simbola“,

<sup>9</sup> Rastko Petrović, *Izložba Bijelića, Dobrovića i Miličića*, Radikal, 22, I, Beograd 9. novembar 1921, ponovo objavljeno u knjizi *Eseji, kritike*, 5, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Beograd 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića*, tekst iz napomena 1. i 2.

diskretnim referencama na određeno i konkretno kulturno i umetničko nasleđe, Tomaševićeva *Dela* kao slike i objekti ujedno sažete i kompleksne kompozicione organizacije, bitno se razlikuju od posleratne neasocijativne geometrijske apstrakcije, kao i od optičke i nekonstruktivističke umetnosti, nalazeći svoje zasebno mesto u vremenu i u sredini njihovog nastanka. Specifična osobina Tomaševićeve geometrije jeste da je „multiformna“ umesto „uniformna“, „polihromna“ umesto „monohromna“, „kompozitna“ umesto „strukturalna“. Proistekla od medijskog ornamenta vodi ka „oduhovljavanju“ i „produhovljavanju“ polaznog motiva, kao i svaka geometrija u umetnosti 20. veka označava težnju ka idealima gradnje i harmonije u dominantno materijalističkom dobu u kojemu jedino umetnosti preostaje da sačuva neophodnost ljudskih duhovnih potreba.

O Tomaševićevoj umetnosti Konstantinović je pisao u dva navrata. Prvi put za katalog izložbe u Galeriji ULUS-a 1968, u tekstu za koji postoji podatak da je bio naglas čitan pred umetnikom u ateljeu, u krugu zajedničkih prijatelja, nekoliko dana pred njegovu iznenadnu smrt, što svedoči o bliskim i prisnim međusobnim odnosima pisca i slikara.<sup>11</sup> Drugi pak put, zapravo u dodatku prvog teksta, objavljenog u katalogu retrospektive u Umetničkom paviljonu 1980, u kojemu u zaključku o suštini umetnikovog opusa tvrdi sledeće:

„Tomašević je živeo, i to intenzivno, kontrapunkt epoha – njegova izložba 1968. upravo je izložba tog kontrapunkta simetrije vizantijskog mozaika, našega folklor, i asimetrijske greške, kao izraza neponovljivosti tog negdašnjeg poretka, ali i kao jedinoga jemstva njegova preobraženoga produžavanja...“.<sup>12</sup>

U uspomenu niza svojih prijatelja – Stojana Čelića, Mile Rajković, Pavla Ugrinova, Vojislava J. Đurića, Lazara Trifunovića, Radomira Konstantinovića, Mihaila Vunjka – Tomašević je zapamćen i predočen kao osoba mnogostrukih, profesionalnih sposobnosti, od rane mladosti intenzivnog življenja, složene ljudske naravi za čije prepoznavanje možda će najsugestivnije reči pronaći Lazar Trifunović:

<sup>11</sup> Radivoj Cvetičanin, *Konstantinović. Hronika. Dan Graf*. Fondacija Stanislav Vinaver, Beograd 2017, str. 572-573.

<sup>12</sup> Radomir Konstantinović, kao napomena 15, str. 21.

„Taj kosmetski ris, onako omanji, ispečen, sa nemirnim plavim očima...“ kojemu su „teška reč i lako zapaljiva krv bili odbrana od sopstvene slabosti i bedem prema životu...“.<sup>13</sup>

Iz podataka njegove profesionalne i umetničke biografije, posebno iz svedočenja saradnika i poznanika, saznaje se da je u mnogim zaduženjima i pre svega u sopstvenoj umetnosti Tomašević izgarao i sagoreo do krajnosti, a tako je bilo i pri nastajanju slika i objekata za dve poslednje izložbe, prve 1967. i naročito druge, čije otvaranje juna 1968. nije doživeo. Zato je o njegovom slikarstvu, posle toliko godina i decenija od nastanka, nemoguće u celini raspravljati odvojeno i nezavisno od ostalih uloga u kulturnom i javnom prostoru sredine. No pored i iznad tih uloga, upravo umetnost, naročito ona poznog perioda, jeste njegova najtrajnija ostavština kojoj, kako vreme odmiče, nova vrednovanja sve više idu u prilog i time potvrđuju njegovo vrlo istaknuto istorijsko mesto.<sup>14</sup> Upravo u jednom od tih novijih vrednovanja, povodom izložbe u Galeriji RTS-a 2005. godine, Zoran Pavlović u tekstu sa podnaslovom „Između tradicionalnog i modernog“, navodi sledeći, samoj problemskoj suštini umetnikovog dela, valjda najadekvatniji zaključak:

„Tomašević je pak, svestan sopstvenog vremena i širokih mogućnosti njegove moderne plastičke semantike, koristio njene modalitete u sasvim drugačije svrhe. Naime, on je upravo preko njih pokušao da vaspostavi očigledan primer sveprožimanja na bazičnom antropološkom nivou, gde se drevni znaci i aktuelni elementi plastičkih struktura sustiču, dopunjuju, prepliću i gde je najvažnije utvrditi da samo još uvek, ontološki gledano, ono što znamo da jesmo sa svim našim čulima, osećanjima sveta, vrednosti i sveta i nas u njemu“.<sup>15</sup>

Deo teksta  
UVOD U SLIKARSTVO ALEKSANDRA TOMAŠEVIĆA:  
„IDEJA PROŠLOSTI“ U JEZIKU I KONTEKSTU POSLERATNOG MODERNIZMA

<sup>13</sup> Lazar Trifunović, kao napomena 12.

<sup>14</sup> Poslednje: *Dijalog (Mira Brtko, Milena Čubraković – Aleksandar Tomašević, Lazar Vozarević)*, Nacionalna galerija, Beograd, Galerija „Lazar Vozarević“, Sremska Mitrovica 2019, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka, 1950-2000*, uvodni tekst u katalogu Nikola Kusovac, *Između ikone i slike*, Galerija Doma Vojske Srbije, Beograd 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Isto kao napomena 13, str. 182.

Dušan Milovanović

„Dela“ Aleksandra Tomaševića iz ugla kolekcionara i ljubitelja

Zahvaljujući pozivu Galerije Vasić da, povodom izložbe selekcije radova Aleksandra Tomaševića u godini kada se navršava sto godina od njegovog rođenja, dam svoj pogled na njegovo stvaralaštvo kao vrstu drugačije perspektive, pokušaću da sumiram utiske koje njegova umetnost izaziva, nadajući se da će ovakav uvid biti shvaćen kao nešto više od pokušaja da se zadovolji taština kolekcionara koji želi da istakne svoje učešće u baštinjenju umetničkih dometa prominentnih stvaralaca.

Delo Aleksandra Tomaševića je izazov, ono svojom zaokruženošću, retkom promišljenošću, superiornim plastičnim uobličavanjem arhetipskih vizuelnih znakova tera na izlazak iz komforne zone pukog posmatranja, i daje podsticaj i posmatraču laiku da pokuša da objasni šta ga, zaboga, toliko pogađa na tim savršeno umirujućim, zaodnutim, čak bezazlenim slikama. Zar svaka velika umetnost ne čini upravo to, izazaziva stalno preispitivanje granica kako emotivnog, tako i intelektualnog horizonta?

Pre desetak godina sam prvi put bio u prilici da pogledam Tomaševićeva dela. U početku mi ništa nije bilo jasno. U takvim situacijama, kada ste suočeni sa stvaralačkim opusom koji podrazumeva odnegovanost posmatračevog oka i razrađenu prijemčivost za vizuelne impresije višeg reda, dobro je osloniti se na pomoć stručnijih lica. Ja sam imao tu sreću da mi prijatelj koji je organizovao izložbu da podsticaja da se pozabavim Tomaševićevim vizuelnim jezikom. Osećajući da ispod, na prvu loptu nekomunikativne, apstraktno orkestrirane anikonične predstave pulsira neka topla, iz dalekih praznina crpljena energija slike, nabavio sam kataloge prethodnih izložbi, čitao, promišljao navode kroz stalno vraćanje na reprodukovana dela.

Tomašević je imao tu sreću da njegovo stvaralaštvo u samom procesu nastajanja bude osvetljeno kroz tumačenja autora čija je ekspertiza omogućila perspektive koje značajno doprinose povoljnom vrednovanju opusa. Uvidi koje su pružili razni autori, a pre svih Stojan Čelić, Mila Rajković i Radomir Konstantinović, nadahnuto svedoče o načinu nastajanja samih dela, uvode nas u svet Tomaševićeve kreativnosti i intelektualno ubedljivo obrazlažu značaj njegovog stvaralaštva za modernu umetnost. Neka mi bude oprošteno ako u daljem tekstu budem prisvajao njihova tumačenja, ipak sam ja amater koji je svakako lišen superiorne pronicljivosti koju su oni demonstrirali nadahnuti umetnikovim stvaralaštvom.

U iskustvu ljubitelja vizuelnih umetnosti i kolekcionara, jedna impresija je više puta potvrđena: prilikom posmatranja kreacija izabranog umetnika, potrebno je da se desi da bar jedna tvorevina proizvede vizuelni utisak podignutog intenziteta kojim se nepogrešivo prepoznaje remek delo: vrhunska slika je slična vrhunskoj poeziji, čim je vidite, pročitate, osećate da ste se susreli sa delom toliko sugestivnim u svojoj zaokruženosti da je i laiku jasno da upravo ono predstavlja vrhunac stvaralačkog komponovanja određenog autora. U Tomaševićevom opusu pokušaću na primeru nekih dela koji su deo postavke izložbe u Galeriji Vasić, a koja su na mene nesumnjivo ostavila tako snažan utisak da dam moj pogled na značaj njegovog stvaralaštva.

Jedan od najvećih izazova apstaktnog slikarstva je kako, uz svojevajno ograničen broj izražajnih sredstava doći do plastičnog znaka koji daje osećaj punoće. Svedenost u imaginaciji, disciplina u izvedbi, uzdržavanje od efekata bilo koje vrste su atributi koji ništa sami po sebi ne postižu ukoliko nisu vođeni sigurnom rukom majstora čija je razigrana imaginacija svojevajno ograničena intelektualno rigoroznim umetničkim konceptom izražavanja. Ali, kod Tomaševićevog dela ima tu i nekakve topline, reminiscencije na Mediteran, na vizuelni kod nasleđa koji je zapliven u našim ponorima a koji čini da njegovu simboličnu predstavu prepoznamo kao nešto blisko.

Nakon kratkotrajnog eksperimenta u istraživanju semantičkih mogućnosti tehnike enformela, Aleksandar Tomašević, počev od 1963. godine, prelazi odlučno u novu fazu stvaralaštva koju karakteriše potpuno dovršen, u organizaciji slikane površine i upotrebljenim sredstvima retko konsekventan vizuelni kod, kojim na superioran način rešava upravo naveden izazove apstraktno predstave. Tehnika je skoro isključivo tempera na drvenom panelu, format je skoro pa standardizovan na 50 x 70 cm, ređe 70 x 100 cm. Reklo bi se da umetnik, svođenjem fizičkih datosti samog materijala na jednu ili dve opcije, pokazuje samouverenost u odabiru puta izražavanja koja se dalje manifestuje kroz krajnje restriktivnu bojenu gamu na sada isključivo dvodimezionalnoj slikarskoj plohi. Vrlo je značajno da umetnik počev od ovog ciklusa svoja dela imenuje isključivo numerički, što je po mom mišljenju jasan pokazatelj volje da se i u aspektu inicijalnog označavanja isključi svaka referentnost na autora. Delo postaje bezlično, predato javnosti i obeleženo samo primordijalnim simboličkim znakom: brojem. Jedna od slika koja, po mome sudu, na najbolji način sublimira izražajne kapacitete ovakvog rigoroznog prosedeja je *Delo 63/38*: težak odsjaj bazične crne podloge, pri dužem posmatranju polako ali sigurno,

kroz pozicioniranje pažljivo odabranog simbola čija je praosnova duboko usađena u izražajna sredstva narodnih rukotvorina, i kroz isijavanje minuciozno obrađenih površina u svetlom polju, počinje da odaje utisak jedne monumentalne dovršenosti. Kvalitet, taktilnost slikarskog postupka ovde služi samo da uobliči pokušaj da se doirne jedna realnost višeg, usuđujem se reći duhovnog reda. Ko je još tako slikao? Paul Klee, Buda iz Bauhausa. Nek se oprostite činjenica da Tomaševića poredim sa jednim od Titana umetničkog sazvežđa vsioke moderne, ali zar nisu obojica svoje polazište tražili u smernom ovladavanju zanatskim tehnikama, odbacujući hybris umetničkog zanosa? Klee je slikao i na džaku od jute, nije mu trebao „galerijski“ format da bi dao dela tolike mistične lepote da kod posmatrača izazivaju osećaj da stoji pred tajnom alhemijskog preobražaja, za koji ne može da pronađe ključ već samo da ga nasluti. Na posletku, izražajni jezik oba autora uspeva da na retko autentičan način korespondira sa izazovima trenutka savremene umetnosti u kome deluju.

Mislim da je važno istaći da utisak koji Tomaševićeva dela izazivaju nikada ne ide u pravcu povišene emocionalnosti, afektivnog odobravanja svojstvenog percepciji dela umetnika koji u svojoj produkciji nose snažno indukovanu osećajnost: Tomašević kao da tera posmatrača da pokuša da se sabere, umiri, da dozove tišinu u kojoj unutrašnje oko najednom prepoznaje genijalnost jednostavnog opštenja elementarnim znakovima. Ukoliko posmatrač ne želi ili ne može da se refokusira na tu tačku polaznog ćutanja, ova dela će mu biti dosadna, nezanimljiva, previše prosta... Ali, ukoliko ikad mu to uspe, biće u prilici da oseti vedrinu ozarenosti koja nema ništa sa previše intelektualizovanom recepcijom umetničkog stvaralaštva koja karakteriše period u kome su ova dela nastala. Ovde je utisak neposredniji, nikako efektan ili afektivan, već, nošen jednom simboličnom predstavom višeg reda, proizvodi osećaj produhovljenog mira.

Toj težnji za postizanjem harmonije Aleksandar Tomašević se u najvećoj meri približio u poslednjoj fazi njegovog stvaralaštva koja nastupa od 1965. godine i traje do smrti. Na posthumnoj izložbi 1968. godine u Galeriji ULUS-a bilo je izloženo 53 dela te poslednje faze. Opus je finalizovan, Ćelić navodi da mu je sam Tomašević rekao da mu je to poslednja izložba.<sup>1</sup> Kad se sretnete sa tim delima, jasno Vam je odakle

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<sup>1</sup> Monografija *Aleksandar Tomašević*, priredio Vladeta Vojinović u saradnji sa Gordanom Tomašević, Tekstovi: Mila Rajković, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Stojan Ćelić, *Bleške o smrti, životu, putevima ka delu i delu slikara Aleksandra Tomaševića*, sa obimnom dokumentacijom, ULUS, Beograd 1988.

potiče takva vrsta definitivnih zaključaka. U pitanju su dela jednog novog znakovnog sadržaja, baziranog na kombinovanju krajnje redukovanih geometrijskih gradivnih elemenata, sačinjenih od drvenih profila sa produbljenim kanalima, ponegde bojanih uglavnom osnovnim bojama, ili čak, u po meni umetnički najrelvatnijim delima, u monohromnim kompozicijama. Magnum opus po mome sudu najreprezentativnije ilustrije poslednje delo u katalogu izložbe: *Delo 65/53*. Beli red pravougaonih gradivnih elemenata presečen središnje postavljenim kvadratima i trouglovima: jedino spoljna svetlost koja pada na ovu kompoziciju može da modifikuje percepciju. Ali, utisak svakako počiva na punoći, dovršenosti, jednoj monumentalnoj kakvoći koja je lišena ikakve potrebe za ornamentom bilo koje vrste. Kao što dorskom stubu ne treba nikakav ukras da bi bio savršen, tako i u ovom slikarstvu taktilne prezentacije koherentnost umetničke zamisli i sigurnost u izvođenju nas dovode do spoznaje o, u neku ruku, inicijastičkoj snazi geometrijskog izraza.

Radomir Konstantinović je u svom predgovoru u katalogu spomenute izložbe dao jednu vrlo značajnu opservaciju koja se tiče samog procesa rada prilikom stvaranja ovih dela. On je uporedio Tomaševićev postupak sklapanja sa dećijom igrom. Mislim da je takvim poređenjem naslućen jedan dublji značaj: ako se čovek igra na pravi način, polazeći od punog razumevanja svoje pozicije u stvaralačkom komponovanju, sa iskustveno potvrđenim intelektualnim okvirom koji služi kao baza za kreaciju, krajnji rezultat će biti delo velike sugestivne snage. Fridrih Niče je rekao: - Čovek postiže zrelost kada dostigne ozbiljnost sa kojom je kao dete pristupao igri. Ne znam za savršeniji primer gde ljudsko stvaralaštvo potvrđuje ovu formulaciju od zrelog opusa Aleksandra Tomaševića.

Kontekstualizacija tog opusa u svetskim i vremenskim okvirima je zadatak čije ispunjenje daleko prevazilazi moje mogućnosti. Uprkos tome, želim da skrenem pažnju na neke akcente koji tom zadatku mogu dati izvestan doprinos, pre svega u poređenju sa stvaralaštvom nekih od autora koji ostavljaju trag na međunarodnoj sceni.

Tomaševićeve slike-objekti iz poslednje faze stvaralaštva u izvedebenom pristupu predstavljaju novinu i samo je nekolicina autora tretirala slikarske probleme na uporediv način: početkom šezdesetih Jan Schoonhoven, član grupe Nul, u Amsterdamu stvara monohromne objekte koje odlikuje repetativnost, serijalnost, potpuni fokus na mutlipticiranje osnovnog gradivnog elementa koji organizuju sliku rešetkaste strukture. Iako polazne osnove delovanja nul grupe u okviru šireg

međunarodnog ZERO pokreta nisu ni u kakvoj korelaciji sa okruženjem u kome je Tomašević stvarao, kada se ostane pred pojedinačnim delom oba autora, u mome iskustvu utisak koji ostavljaju na posmatrača je dosta sličan: osećaj meditativnosti koji svoju osnovu vuče iz konsekvetno, strogo promišljene organizacije slike, u isto vreme zadržavajući jednu auru zaodenutosti, topline, čija je baza zanatski krajnje pažljivo tretiranje gradivnog materijala. Schoonhoven jeste pripadao umetničkoj grupi koja je svoje osnovne postulate crpela iz već proživljenih iskustava enformela, nastojeći da raskine sa tradicijom „velikog“ slikarstva koje akcentuje umetničku ličnost, dok Tomašević svoju stvaralačku energiju prepoznatljivo crpe iz vizuelnih kodova direktno naslonjenih na vizantijsku, a šire i mediteransku tradiciju, ali je njegova interpretacija umetničkog nasleđa izvedena na toliko konzistentan, savremenom jeziku svojstven način, da je moguće praviti paralele između krajnjih rezultata njihovog stvaralaštva. Obojica biraju depersonalizovano, u nekim slučajevima potpuno istovetno numeričko obeležavanje svojih kreacija koja u u svom sublimnom izrazu prevazilaze granice vremena i mesta i ostavljaju utisak nepatvorene, jednostavne, oduhovljene lepote.

Tomaševićovo stvaralaštvo tako pripada onom širem modernističkom proseyu koji slikarske probleme postavlja i razrešava sa pozicija vere u značajnost *savoir faire* koji baštini tradiciju duboku usađenu u stvaralačke impulse umetnika. U vremenu njegovog punog zamaha već na svetskoj pozornici preovlađuju tendencije, pre svega izražene kroz američki pop art, koje subverzivno, sa velikom dozom cinizma postavljaju filozofska pitanja: šta se može nazvati umetnički objektom, da li obrada banalne slike proizvoda kao što je konzerva supe samim činom prestavljanja postaje umetnički fetiš? Tomašević je daleko od takvih dilema, njegova polazna pozicija je i dalje autorefleksivna ekspresija kao fundament stvaralaštva. Jedan od velikih polemičara o prirodi savremene umetnosti, Žan Bodrijar, u jednom svom tekstu baveći se pitanjem mogućnosti obnavljanja radikalne iluzije kao osnove slike, kaže „Uprkos svim modernim sujeverjima o „liberalizaciji“ mora se reći da forme nisu slobodne, figure nisu slobodne: upravo suprotno, one su vezane: jedini način da ih se oslobodi je da se vežu.. drugim rečima treba pronaći te veze, otkriti odnose koji ih drže u suptilnoj korelaciji. Štaviše, one kroz povezivanje izazivaju same sebe i umetnost mora da prodre u intimnost tog procesa“<sup>2</sup> Mislim da je ova Bodrijarova konstatacija duboko istinita i rekao bih da se Tomaševićev pristup stvaralaštvu u najvećoj meri kreće ka takvom, suštinskom orkestriranju formi. Na međunarodnoj sceni na taj način poku-

šava da reši probleme slike krug američkog apstraktnog ekspresionizma druge generacije, u okviru kojeg je u isto vreme kad i Tomašević delovala autorka čiji vizuelni izraz dozvoljava u dobroj meri poređenja sa onim što je Tomašević radio. U pitanju je američka slikarka kanadskog porekla Agnes Martin.

Martinova je početkom šezdestih godina već izbrusila jedan, u upotrebljenim sredstvima izrazito reduktivan vizuelni iskaz, opet zasnovan na ponavljanju rešetkastih struktura, koji u svojim najizvrsnijim dometima jasno ističe nameru da se kroz stvaralački postupak dođe do transcendentne realnosti. Meditativnost, čak blagost njene umetnosti je glavni utisak koji se ponese kad se stoji pred njenim delima. Opet je u pitanju detinje prosta znakovna struktura pred kojom se posmatrač seti pojma sreće. I pored te jednostavnosti zadržan je svojevrsan lični rukopis, pa i mogućnost greške, onog pojma na čiji značaj u stvaralaštvu Aleksandra Tomaševića veoma inspirisano ukazao Radomir Konstantinović.

Značaj stvaralaštva dva gore pomenuta autora u poslednjih pola veka je stručno revalorizovan obimnim studijama, organizovanjem retrospektivnih izložbi u najprominetnijim svetskim muzejima, konstantnim prisustvom u osvrtima kako stručne, tako i opše javnosti.

Jasna je prednost pripadanja umetničkom okruženju razvijenih, visoko odnegovanih kulturnih sredina. Delo Aleksandra Tomaševića, koje na zanimljiv način korespondira sa umetničkim dometima Schoonhovena i Martinove, ni na koji način ne zaostaje u svojim vrhovima za doprinosom koji su svetskoj baštini moderne umetnosti ostavili ovi autori. Njegov opus je obimom nevelik, prerana smrt ga je sprečila da ostvari korpus koji bi i svojim kvantitetom silovito delovao na umetničku javnost jedne, moramo to reći, male kulturne sredine kojoj je pripadao. Uprkos tome, ipak sam, visoko vrednujući njegove stvaralačke domete u posleratnoj srpskoj umetnosti, iznova začuđen i razočaran što poslenici institucionalne kulturne javnosti nisu u većoj meri revalorizovali njegove autentične doprinose?

I tako, kad neće stručnjaci, ostaje nama kolekcionarima, staraocima kulturnog nasleđa amaterima, da pokušamo da dočaramo impresiju i važnost Tomaševićeve umetnosti. U potrazi za načinom da se verbalno odgonetne tajna izvrsnosti te umetnosti, često sam bivao pod utiskom da te slike kriju jednu duboko poetsku stvaralačku suštinu i , da bi se došlo do adekvatnog opisa njihove snažne, a prikri-

<sup>2</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The conspiracy of art*, Semiotext(e) 2005, str. 127.

vene osećajnosti, treba obratiti pažnju na šire polje tumačenja umetničkog stvaralaštva, mimo kritičarskih uvida koji su fokusirani na svet slike.

Imanentni poetski kvalitet tih slika je, po meni, u jednom fundamentalnom dosluhu sa najznačajnijim kreativnim doprinosima upravo u sferi poezije. 1968. godina Tomaševićeve smrti, je godina u kojoj Vasko Popa objavljuje zbirku pesama *Sporredno nebo*. Da li je umesno reći da je Tomašević slikao kako je Popa pevao? Da bi se shvatila važnost stvaralačkih doprinosa na širem umetničkom polju pozvaću u pomoć ubedljiv osvrt na delo Vaska Pope: Predrag Palavestra u kapitalnoj knjizi *Posleratna srpska književnost 1945–1970, o Popinoj poeziji* piše "... Služeći se komplikovanim sistemom određivanja vrednosti i značenja *pesničkih* simbola-preuzetih iz riznice narodnih priča, drevnih religija, starih slovenskih predanja, pa čak i kabalističkih razrešenja mističnih znakova- Popa unutrašnja značenja svoje *pesme* izražava posredno. Prividna nejasnost i na mahove mutna zagonetnost simbola i slika u njegovoj *poeziji*, upućuju na to da autor svet ne prikazuje u spoljnoj, logičnoj projekciji, već kao poetsku projekciju legende, bajke i sna, gde je sve moguće.... Prožet ličnim sintaksičnim strukturama, *pesnički* jezik u knjizi je svetao i čist, besprekoran u svojoj jednostavnosti. Unutrašnja arhitektura *knjige* počiva na harmoničnom skladu racionalnih i poetskih impulsa... Prevazilazeći granice tla i podneblja na kome je nastala, a za koje je životno vezana poreklom, duhom i oblikom, *poezija* Vaska Pope ima otvorenu dimenziju ka univerzalnosti."<sup>3</sup> Sada je možda prilika s da se i mi igramo, ovoga puta rečima; kurzivom obeležene pojmove zamenimo: Pesnički-slikarski; pesma-slika; poezija-slikarstvo; knjiga-delo. Palavestrina sublimacija značaja i pozicije umetnosti Vaska Pope tako postaje krajnje precizan instrument za definisanje posebnih kvaliteta slikarskog dela Aleksandra Tomaševića.

To delo, nakon više od pet decenija od odlaska samog Tomaševića, traje, s protokom vremena značaj njegovog originalnog doprinosa raste i jasno ukazuje na potrebu dalje revalorizacije pozicije njegovog stvaralaštva. Tekst koji je pred Vama je lišen takvih ambicija, njegova namera je da samo posluži kao ilustracija blagorodnog uticaja koji umetničko stvaralaštvo najvišeg reda vrši na pojedince koji imaju tu vrstu privilegije da, bar privremeno, budu okruženi delima autora kakav je Aleksandar Tomašević.

<sup>3</sup> Predrag Palavestra, *Posleratna srpska književnost 1945-1970 i njena istorija*, JP Službeni glasnik, 2012, str. 213.

1921 - Rođen 5. avgusta u Soko Banji.

Osnovnu i srednju školu učio je u Kosovskoj Mitrovici, Skoplju i Beogradu.

1942 - Završio Učiteljsku školu u Beogradu, gde istovremeno pohađa i Umetničku školu Mladena Josića (nastavnici Jovan Bijelić, Zora Petrović, Franjo Radočaj i Svetolik Lukić).

1944 – Odlazi za učitelja u jedno selo na Kopaoniku, a zatim u Ibarski partizanski odred.

1947 – Upisuje Likovnu akademiju u Beogradu ( koju završava 1952. godine). Profesori: Ljubica Sokić, Ivan Tabaković, Nedeljko Gvozdenović, Kosta Hakman, Mihailo Petrov.

1949 – Jedan semester provodi na *Ecole nationale superieure des beaux arts* u Parizu u ateljeu za fresku.

1952/62 – Radi kao slikar konzervator u Saveznom institutu za zaštitu spomenika kulture u Beogradu.

1952/53 – Usavršava konzervaciju slika u Luvru (Pariz) kod Roberta Milera.

1955 – Nastavlja usavršavanje konzervacije slika u Briselu, u Kraljevskom institutu za zaštitu kulturnog nasleđa, kod Alberta Filipa.

Radi na konzervaciji i restauraciji slika na platnu i drvetu, kao i na otkriću, konzervaciji i prezentaciji srednjovekovnih fresaka: crkve sv. Sofije u Ohridu, crkve u Lipljanu, manastira Morače, crkve sv. Petra u Bijelom Polju, crkve sv. Apostola u Pečkoj patrijaršiji, Gračanici i Hilandaru. U isto vreme radi i kopije fresaka.

Bio je član grupe Samostalni i Decembarske grupe.

Tokom svog života sakupio je bogatu zbirku narodne keramike.

1961 – Dobio je Orden rada sa srebrnim vencem.

1962 – Izabran je za docenta a zatim za vanrednog profesora Akademije primenjenih umetnosti u Beogradu za predmet Monumentalno slikarstvo, gde ostaje sve do svoje smrti.

1968 – Umro je u Beogradu 19 juna. Posthumno dobija Oktobarsku nagradu Beograda za likovnu umetnost.

1969 – Fakultet primenjenih umetnosti osnovao je Nagradu Aleksandar Tomašević za najbolji studentski rad.



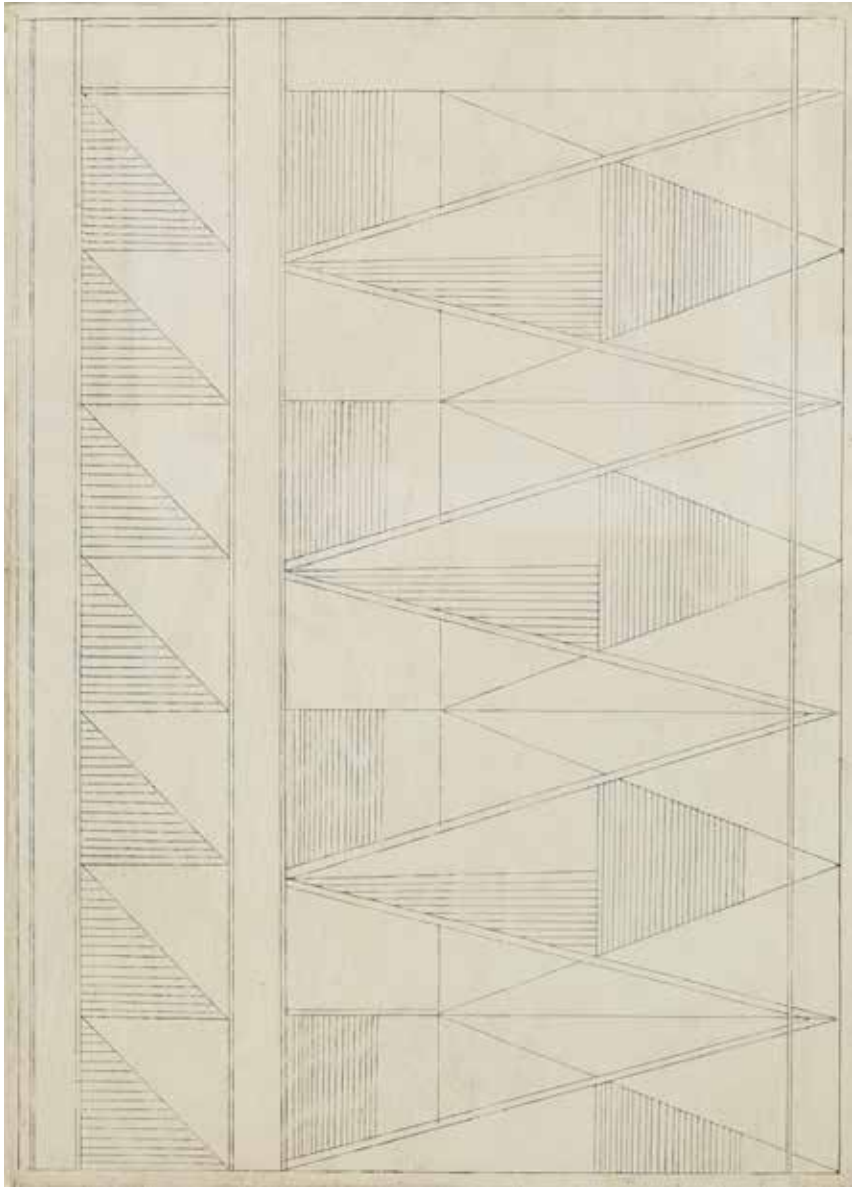
1. Delo 63 / Work 63, 1964



2. Delo 63/3 / Work 63/3, 1964



3. Delo 63/54 / Work 63/54, 1964



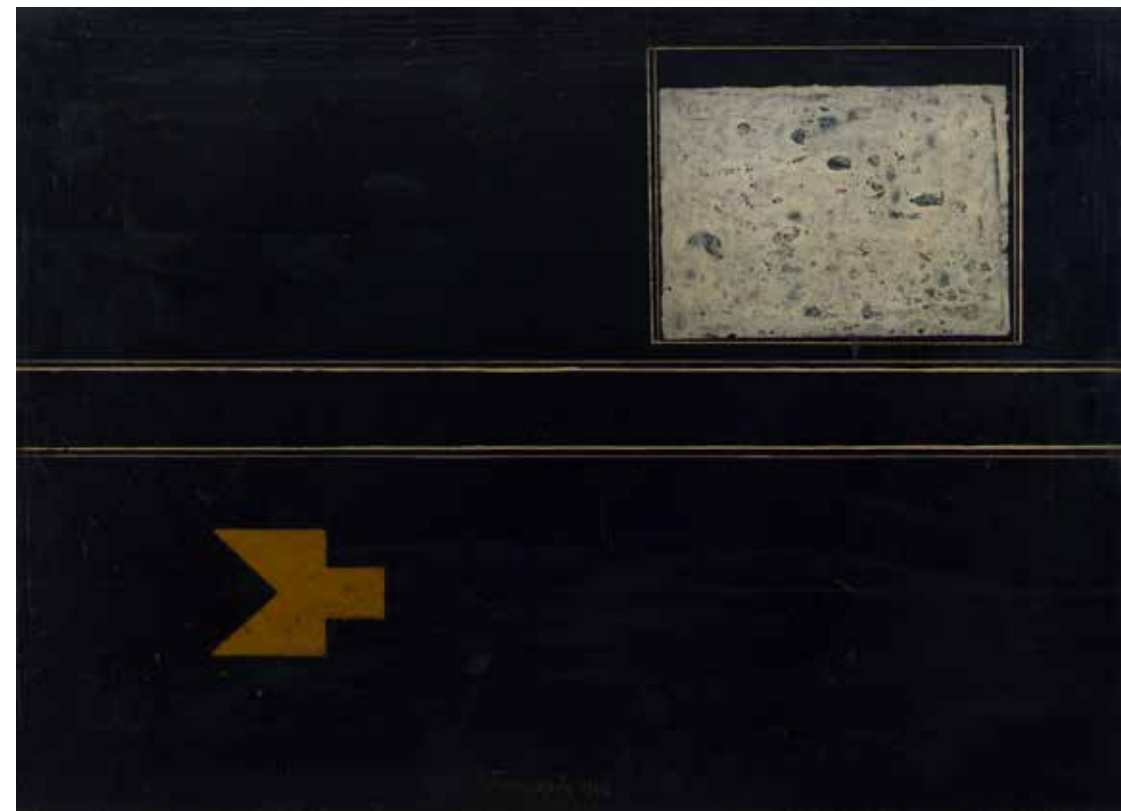
4. Delo 63/19 / Work 63/19, 1965



5. Delo 63/23 / Work 63/23, 1965



6. Delo 63 / Work 63, 1966



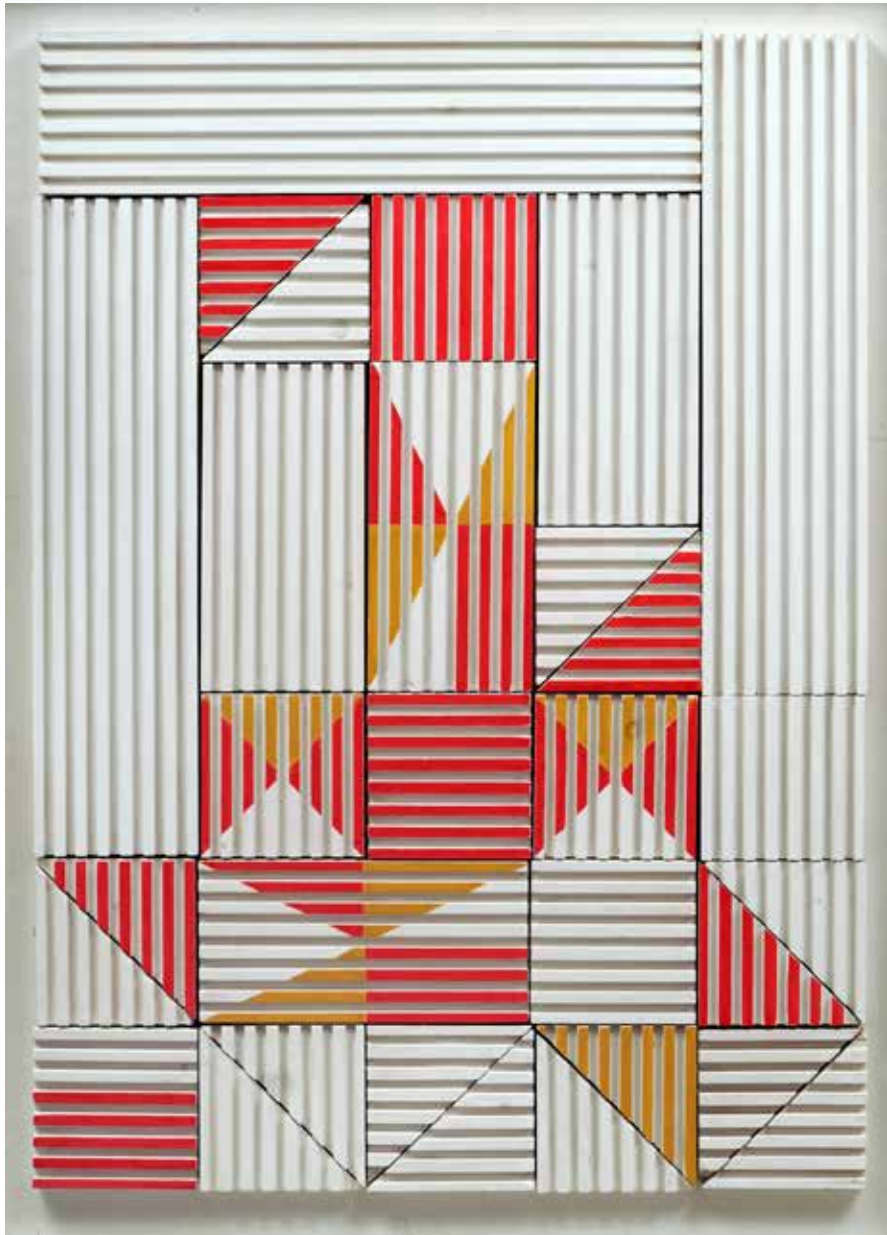
7. Delo 63/38 / Work 63/38, 1966



9. Delo 65/9 / Work 65/9, 1967



10. Delo 65/11 / Work 65/11, 1967



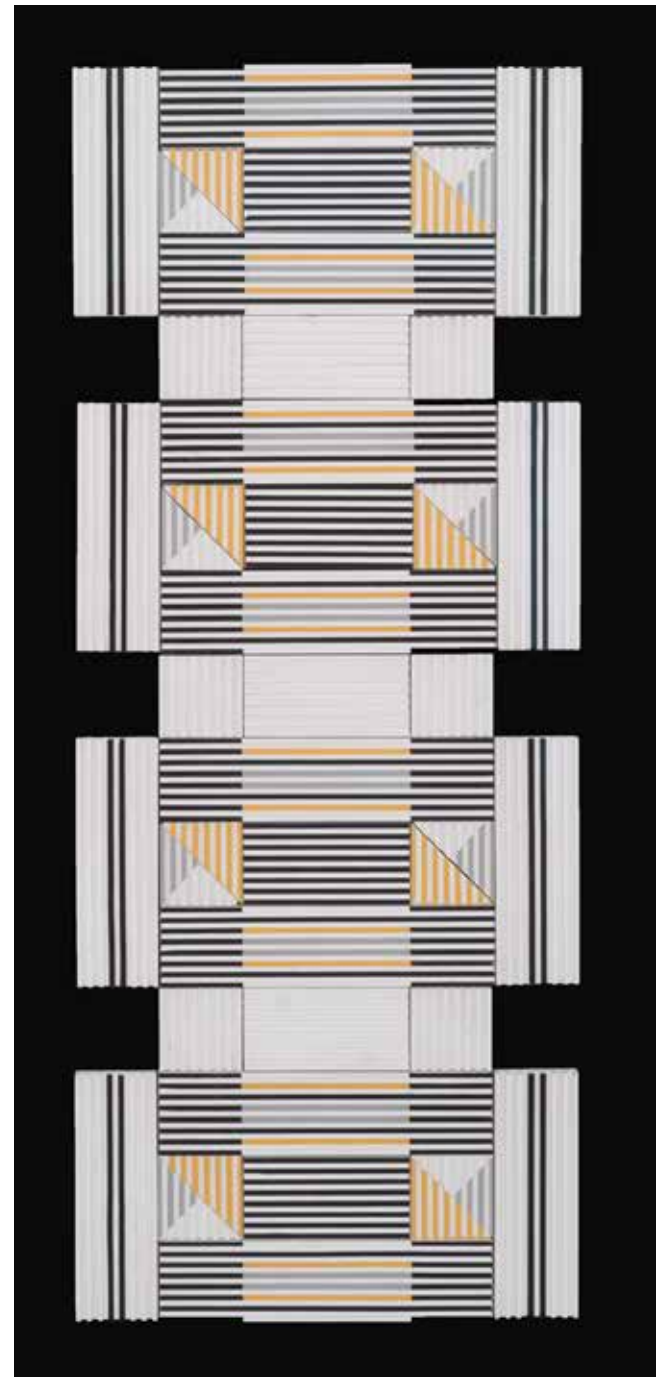
11. *Delo 65/17 / Work 65/17, 1967*



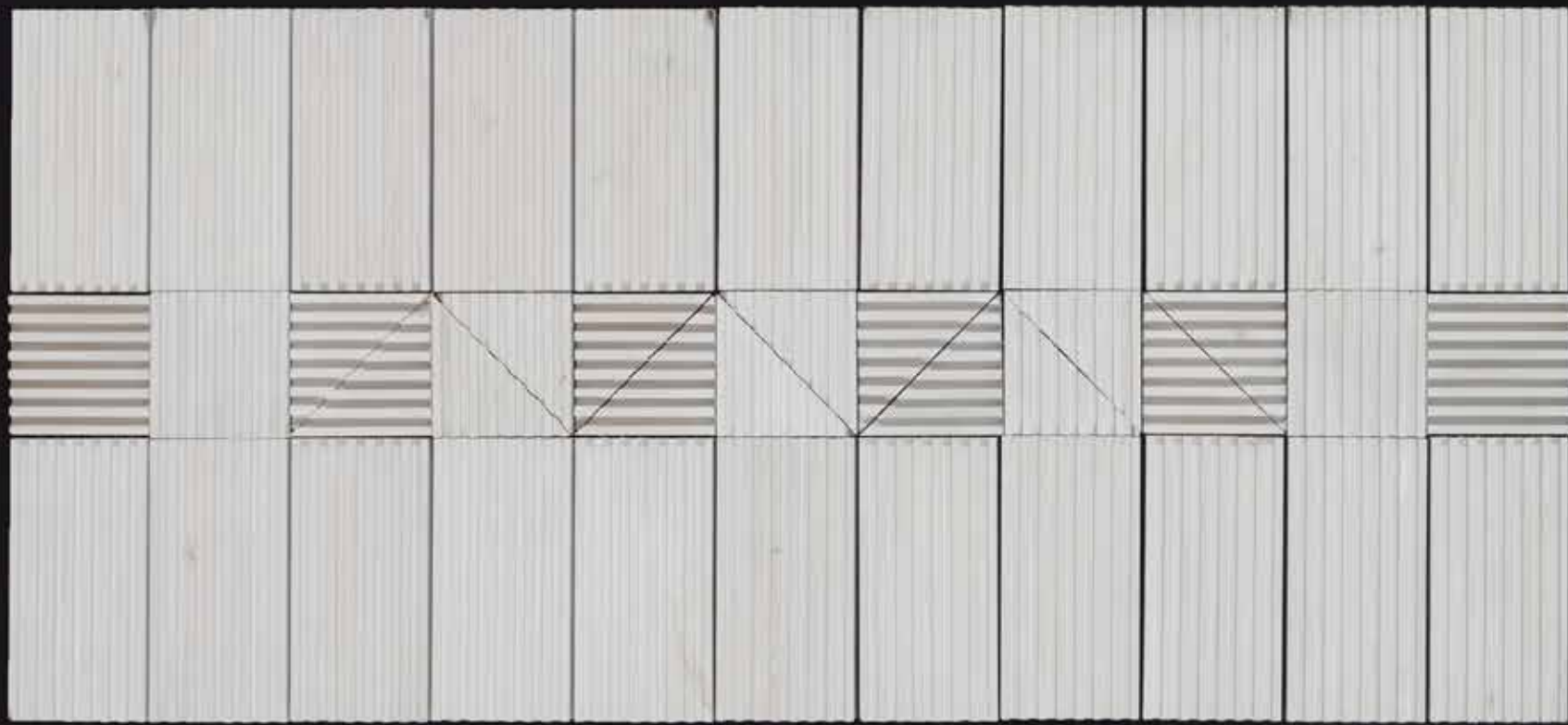
12. *Delo 65/19 / Work 65/19, 1968*



8. *Delo 65/5 / Work 65/5, 1967*



13. *Delo 65/51 / Work 65/51, 1968*



Two solo exhibitions, held within a short space of time – the first one in 1967, at the Gallery of the Yugoslav People's Army Hall, and the second one held posthumously in 1968, at the Gallery of the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia – brought Aleksandar Tomašević back onto the Belgrade art scene after a long and highly regarded, but discreet presence in the 1950's and 1960's, from the early exhibitions of paintings, held in 1952 and 1954, to his regular appearances with the Independents group (in the 1952-1954 period) and the December Group (1955-1960). His artistic reputation was constantly on the increase, from a retrospective exhibition held at the Cvijeta Zuzorić Art Pavilion in 1980,<sup>1</sup> through a monograph published in 1988,<sup>2</sup> to the last exhibitions for the time being, held at the National Museum in 2000, the Gallery of the Serbian Radio Television in 2005, the Gift Collection of Rajko Mamuzić in Novi Sad in 2007, the RIMA Gallery in Kragujevac in 2010<sup>3</sup> and the Sales Gallery "Belgrade" in 2017,<sup>4</sup> all of which definitively makes Tomašević one of the exceptionally important protagonists of Serbian art in the second half of the 20th century.<sup>5</sup>

1 The catalogue of the retrospective exhibition *Aleksandar Tomašević 1921-1968, Slike i crteži* [Paintings and Drawings], introductory texts: Stojan Čelić, *Beleške o smrti, životu, putevima ka delu i delu slikara Aleksandra Tomaševića* [Notes of the Death, Life, Paths towards the Work and the Work of the Painter Aleksandar Tomašević], Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića* [For Aleksandar Tomašević], Mihailo Vunjak, *Aleksandar Tomašević kao slikar-konzervator* [Aleksandar Tomašević as a Painter-Conservator], with a biography and a bibliography, the Cvijeta Zuzorić Art Pavilion, Belgrade, 11th February – 3rd March 1980.

2 The monograph *Aleksandar Tomašević*, edited by Vladeta Vojinović in cooperation with Gordana Tomašević, texts: Mila Rajković, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića* [The Painting of Aleksandar Tomašević], Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića*, Stojan Čelić, *Beleške o smrti, životu, putevima ka delu i delu slikara Aleksandra Tomaševića*, with voluminous documentation, ULUS, Belgrade, 1988.

3 The catalogue of the exhibition *Aleksandar Tomašević*, introductory text by Ljubica Miljković, the Rima Gallery, Kragujevac, October-November 2010.

4 The catalogue of the exhibition *Aleksandar Tomašević*, introductory text by Ljubica Miljković, *Aleksandar Tomašević, Nezavršeni simboli iz ateljea na Kosančićevom vencu* [Aleksandar Tomašević, Unfinished Symbols from His Studio in Kosančićev venac Street], with a biography and a list of basic literature, The Sales Gallery "Belgrade", Belgrade, September-October 2017.

5 Other basic literature:

Štefka Cobej, *Umetnički lik Aleksandra Tomaševića* [The Artistic Personality of Aleksandar Tomašević], *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske*, 7, Novi Sad, 1971, Lidija Merenik, *Aleksandar Tomašević*, in the book *Ideološki modeli: srpsko slikarstvo 1945-1968* [Ideological Models: Serbian Painting 1945-1968], Beopolis, Belgrade, 2001, and *Umetnost i vlast. Srpsko slikarstvo 1945-1968* [Art and the Powers-That-Be. Serbian Painting 1945-1968], Vujičić kolekcija, Filozofski fakultet, Belgrade, 2010, the catalogue of the exhibition *Aleksandar Tomašević*, introductory text by Nikola Kusovac, Galerija RTS, Belgrade, 2005, Zoran Pavlović, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića, tradicionalno i moderno* [The Painting of Aleksandar

Among the basic data from Tomašević's artistic biography, apart from the information pertaining to his studies of painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade between 1947 and 1952, of particular importance are the data on his study visit to *Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux arts* in Paris in 1949 for the purpose of studying the fresco painting technique. Applying the knowledge gained there, he became one of the younger copyists involved in the realisation of copies of frescoes for the exhibition *The Mediaeval Art of the Peoples of Yugoslavia* in Paris in 1950. He underwent specialist training in conservation at the Louvre in Paris in the 1952-53 period, and at the Royal Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Brussels in 1955.<sup>6</sup> But far more than gaining and applying technical knowledge, as well as getting employed at the Painterly-Conservatory Studio of the Federal Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Monuments and working as an Associate Professor at the Academy of Applied Arts, what was essential and decisive for Tomašević was his lifetime vocation of care about the preservation, renewal and cultivation of the ancient domestic cultural treasury, as well as striving to establish his own painterly orientation based precisely on in-depth adoption of the achievements of historical, cultural and artistic heritage.

During the period of his membership in the Independents and the December Group, Tomašević achieved, judging by his retrospective exhibition held in 1980, a voluminous painterly and drawing production within the framework of which he hinted at his basic, subsequently characteristic thematic and ideational orientation. Thus, in *Still Life with a Vase*, 1954, *Picture I*, 1955, *A Goblet and a Glass*, 1956, *White Fish*, 1957, *A Vase from Peć*, 1957, *Still Life*, 1960, and others, one can already discern the characteristics of his then painterly language, which hint at its future development paths. The dominant themes of these pictures are still lifes, or to a lesser degree, fig-

Tomašević: The Traditional and the Modern], Politika, Belgrade, 11th February 2006. Mileta Prodanović, *Aleksandar Tomašević – put od materije freske do duha Vizantije* [Aleksandar Tomašević – The Path from the Matter of the Fresco to the Spirit of Byzantium], *Vizantinsko nasleđe i srpska umetnost* [The Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art], Vizantološki institut SANU, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2016. Ješa Denegri, *Novo u "ideji prošlosti": geometrija Aleksandra Tomaševića* [The New in "the Idea of the Past": The Geometry of Aleksandar Tomašević], *Srpska umetnost 1950-2000. Šezdesete* [Serbian Art 1950-2000. The 1960's], Topy, Belgrade, 2013, reprinted in the book *Temе srpske umetnosti/Srpska umetnost 1950-2000* [Themes of Serbian Art/ Serbian Art 1950-2000], I, Fondacija Kolekcija Trajković, Belgrade, 2019, Nikola Kusovac, *Aleksandar Tomašević*, in the book *Odabrani eseji* [Selected Essays], Umetnička galerija "Radionica duše", Belgrade, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed account of Aleksandar Tomašević as a painter-conservator, see Mihailo Vunjak's text referred to in footnote 1.

ures and landscapes (in the pictures *The Peć Patriarchate*, 1961, *A Façade in Lipljan*, 1962, *The Narthex at Gračanica Monastery*, 1963 and others), where he applied the painterly operation of reducing the motif presented to a two-dimensional image. He views the painting as an autonomous pictorial creation irrespective of its thematic content and symbolic projection. The motif is presented in an exceptionally concise manner through a colour palette that rejects tonal details, making use of occasional accents of pure colours. Through the thematic complex of still lifes and landscapes, he continues the heritage of the domestic modernism from the period between the great wars, subsequently innovating the said thematic complex in the manner of post-war moderate modernist painterly vision. Through a geometrisation of motifs, although still by means of the object's image, the picture is taken almost to the verge of abstraction. Occasionally crossing that borderline, he would take the picture to the expression of the *Informel* (in the paintings that he would call *Informel*, I-VIII, dating from the 1962-1964 period), soon afterwards abandoning this brief (anti-)painterly episode. When, having stopped doing conservatorial work, he definitively dedicated himself solely to the vocation of a painter and the passion of painting, he returned to the original sources and built upon them during the course of two great cycles, both entitled *Work*, as the supreme achievements of his overall painterly opus.

Tomašević's urgent inner need to dedicate himself completely to his own painting after a long period of time filled with other social and cultural obligations is viewed by Trifunović as the inexorable "voice of destiny":

"Within a short space of time, Tomašević, as if in a hurry to complete them before his death, produced two complete cycles: one dominated the exhibition held at the Yugoslav People's Army Hall in 1967, whereas the other had a dominant position at the exhibition held in 1968, which he did not live to see. Those are also two new, great periods of his art."<sup>7</sup>

At the first of the two exhibitions referred to above, held in 1967, Tomašević presented a cycle of tempera on panel works, mostly using standard formats (50x70 cm, 70x50 cm), bearing the common title *Work*, created between 1963 and 1965. The forms are purely geometric, realised by means of a ruler, but are not strictly "mechanical", as

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<sup>7</sup> Lazar Trifunović, *Glas sudbine Aleksandara Tomaševića*, in the book *Od impresionizma do enformela*, Nolit, Belgrade 1982.

a rule, being fitted into a complex compositional synthesis of horizontal and vertical lines, rectangles, squares, triangles forming a mutually harmonious arrangement. Using the tempera on panel technique (instead of oil on canvas), he achieved a compact, slightly relief-like unified texture which, precisely on account of this, resembles the uneven wall surface of a fresco painting. The actual title of this cycle – *Work* – to which a specific code is added (for instance, *Work 63/1*, *Work 63/2*, *Work 63/3*, all the way to *Work 63/54* and the like), points to a shift away from the associative type of abstraction, but still preserves and reveals the distant inspirational starting point, necessary to the artist, namely, the ornamental elements of mediaeval fresco painting. It is, then, geometric painting of visual abundance, refined colours, part of a compositional order of typologically varied forms, instead of a structure of identical elementary units. Coming into being in the 1960's, Tomašević's manual geometrisation of that period is far removed from the obligatory non-referentiality and structural seriality of minimalism and neo-constructivism. Keeping the same title – *Work* – from 1966 onwards Tomašević changed the material and the technical procedure applied in the cycle of works presented at the posthumous solo exhibition held at the Gallery of the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia in 1968. The material used on this occasion – as stated in the 1980 retrospective exhibition catalogue – consisted of "geometric coloured elements made of wood". The said elements are in the form of squares, individual ones or connected through a coupling of two triangles, rhombuses, rectangles of various sizes, arranged symmetrically or asymmetrically, in pure colours (dark blue, brown, black, white). In order to facilitate the technical procedure, the artist does not have to produce these elements himself, but can entrust this task to his assistants. Instead of knowledge of painting, what we have here is the method of putting together or joining precisely produced units made of wood. Apart from the visual element, these works possess a tactile one as well, inviting the viewer to engage in tactile reception; therefore, in addition to the primary contact by sight, additional contact by touch is offered. Instead of belonging to the category of the picture and the discipline of painting, these artistic creations belong to the typology of "the object", where the artist's conceptual unity, consistently implemented throughout his opus, is manifested precisely through the possibility of preserving and mediating the essence of spiritual and "sacral" content and meaning in the construction of the "secular" object, of a markedly contemporary work of art based on a thorough "experience of the past". Emphasising the contemporaneity of Tomašević's formal type of "picture-object", Zoran Pavlović was even of the opinion that "each construction

of his in the form of pseudo-relief could potentially be taken apart and put together anew in an entirely different constellation”, which, however, did not happen in the artist’s practice as the work remained fixed in its initial static position. Although, due to the different fundamental cultural roots in the genesis of his artistic language, he never dealt with the kinetic and multiplicative structure of his objects, Tomašević – in Pavlović’s opinion – at least in terms of their external characteristics, was close to the optical art of the time to a certain degree:

“therefore, a degree of standardisation and repetition of the basic element made sure that they were of great topical interest, so that in formal terms there was a connection to Vasareлизм”.<sup>8</sup>

Rastko Petrović’s warning of long ago, addressed to modern Serbian artists – “until we get over Europe and learn to talk European, we won’t be able to fathom at all what inside of us is of value, let alone to express it in such a way that it would be of value to all the other peoples”<sup>9</sup> – was realised in the work of Aleksandar Tomašević in a very concrete and convincing manner. He was an artist who “got over Europe” by way of professional training in Paris and Brussels, he “learned to speak European” through his painterly language, initially acquainted with the heritage of Cubism and Fauvism, then with that of lyrical and geometric abstraction. It was a markedly modern and contemporary painterly language, based on the role models from the domestic mediaeval heritage, which possessed unique and high values of universal importance in the European culture and art of its time. The idea of continuity and the principle of the evolution of stylistic formations from ancient to modern and contemporary art are some of the fundamental postulates of the science of art history, in keeping with the well-known claim made by Giulio Carlo Argan, stating that “the historical trend characteristic of modern and contemporary art is revival, which, naturally, excludes any return to the old, but confirms that the old is reborn and realised in the modern”. That there was no “return to the old” in Tomašević’s work but actually his “realisation in the modern” is testified to by Tomašević’s painterly language in

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<sup>8</sup> Zoran Pavlović, *Slikarstvo Aleksandra Tomaševića – tradicionalno i moderno*, Politika, Belgrade, 11th February 2006, reprinted in the book *Umetnost tumačenja umetnosti* [The Art of Interpreting Art], Fakultet likovnih umetnosti, Plato, Belgrade, 2009, pp. 179-182.

<sup>9</sup> Rastko Petrović, *Izložba Bijelića, Dobrovića i Miličića* [An Exhibition by Bijelić, Dobrović and Miličić], *Radikal*, 22, 1, Belgrade, 9th November 1921, reprinted in the book *Eseji, kritike* [Essays, Reviews], 5, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 1995.

his mature period, brought to a specific kind of abstraction with geometric formal features, which was possible in the problematic context “after the Informel” in the 1960’s, when two successive exhibitions were staged, in 1967 and 1968 respectively, presenting both Tomašević’s final cycles, bearing the same title – *Work*, within the Belgrade art scene of that time.

It would appear that Radomir Konstantinović came up with the most lucid observation of the essence of Tomašević’s endeavour in these cycles in the following claim:

“Tomašević’s greatest discovery is the immortality of symbols: a symbol does not die with meaning, for its function need not be in the service of meaning only; the function of a symbol is, after the death of meaning, a musical function and a purely fine arts one...”<sup>10</sup>

It follows, therefore, that in Tomašević’s late cycles, inspired by the heritage of mediaeval art, its thematic concerns disappear, but the symbolism remains preserved and imparted in the forms of “pure fine arts features”. It is precisely because of this “immortality of symbols” that, through discreet references to a particular and concrete cultural and artistic heritage, Tomašević’s Works, as pictures and objects with a concise and complex compositional organisation, essentially differ from the post-war non-associative geometric abstraction, and also from optical and neo-constructivist art, finding their own place in time and in the environment they were created in. A specific feature of Tomašević’s geometry is that it is “multiform” instead of “uniform”, “polychromatic” instead of “monochromatic”, “composite” instead of “structural”. Originating from the mediaeval ornament leads to the “spiritualisation” of the initial motif, just as each geometry in the art of the 20th century signifies striving for the ideals of building and harmony in a predominantly materialist age wherein it is only left to art to preserve the necessity of man’s spiritual needs.

Konstantinović wrote about Tomašević’s art on two occasions. He first did so for the catalogue of the exhibition held at the Gallery of the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia in 1968, in a text which is known to have been written to be read out aloud before the artist in his studio, among a circle of common friends, several days before his sudden death, testifying to the close and intimate relations between the writer

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<sup>10</sup> Radomir Konstantinović, *Za Aleksandra Tomaševića*, text referred to in footnotes 1 and 2.

and the painter.<sup>11</sup> The second occasion was actually an addition to the first text, published in the catalogue of the retrospective exhibition held at the Art Pavilion in 1980, and in its concluding part there is the following claim concerning the essence of the artist's opus:

"Tomašević lived, and very intensely at that, the counterpoint of epochs – his 1968 exhibition was precisely an exhibition of that counterpoint of the symmetry of the Byzantine mosaic, our folklore and the asymmetrical mistake, as an expression of the unrepeatability of that former order, and the only guarantee of its transformed prolongation..."<sup>12</sup>

In the reminiscences of a number his friends – Stojan Ćelić, Mila Rajković, Pavle Ugrinov, Vojislav J. Đurić, Lazar Trifunović, Radomir Konstantinović, Mihailo Vunjak – Tomašević is remembered and presented as a person of many professional abilities, living intensely since early youth, possessed of a complex human nature, perhaps most suggestively described by Lazar Trifunović:

"Taj wild cat from Kosmet, of smallish stature, standing in the way, with restless blue eyes... ", for whom "tough talk and blood that easily boils were a defence against his own weakness and a buttress against life..."<sup>13</sup>

From the data pertaining to his professional and artistic biography, especially the testimonies of his collaborators and acquaintances, we find out that, performing many tasks and, first of all, creating his art, Tomašević put in a tremendous effort and truly burned himself out, which was also how it was when he produced the pictures and objects for his last two exhibitions, the one held in 1967 and, especially, the next one, whose opening in June 1968 he did not live to see. That is why it is still impossible to discuss his painting, so many years and decades after its creation, separately from and independently of his other roles in the cultural and public space of his surroundings. But apart from and above those roles, it is precisely his art, especially that of his late period, that constitutes his most lasting legacy, whose reputation, with the passage of time, only gains owing to new evaluations, which confirm its very prominent

11 Radivoj Cvetičanin, *Konstantinović. Hronika. Dan Graf*. Fondacija Stanislav Vinaver, Belgrade, 2017, pp. 572-573.

12 Radomir Konstantinović, as in footnote 15, p. 21.

13 Lazar Trifunović, as in footnote 12.

historical place.<sup>14</sup> It is in one of those recent new evaluations, made on the occasion of the exhibition held at the Gallery of the Serbian Radio Television in 2005, that Zoran Pavlović, in a text subtitled "Between the Traditional and the Modern", offers the following, presumably the most fitting conclusion concerning the problematic essence of the artist's opus:

"Tomašević, however, being aware of his own time and the broad possibilities of its modern plastic semantics, used its modalities for quite different purposes. Namely, it was through them that he tried to establish an obvious example of omnipermeation at the basic anthropological level, where ancient signs and the current elements of plastic structures gather, complement one another, intertwine, and where the most important thing to do is to establish that we are still, ontologically speaking, what we know we are, with all our senses, feelings of the world, values and the world and us in it."<sup>15</sup>

Part of the text  
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PAINTING OF ALEKSANDAR TOMAŠEVIĆ: "THE IDEA OF THE PAST" IN  
THE LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT OF POST-WAR MODERNISM

14 Of which the latest are: *Dijalog* [Dialogue] (Mira Brtko, Milena Čubraković – Aleksandar Tomašević, Lazar Vozarević), the National Gallery, Belgrade, the "Lazar Vozarević" Gallery, Sremska Mitrovica, 2019, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka* [The Serbian Painting of the 20th Century], 1950-2000, introductory text in the catalogue Nikola Kusovac, *Između ikone i slike* [Between the Icon and the Picture], the Gallery of the Yugoslav People's Army Hall, Belgrade, 2020.

15 Same as footnote 13, p. 182.

Art Collector's and Art Lover's Perspective on the "Work" of Aleksandar Tomašević

Thanks to the Vasić Gallery hosting an exhibition of a selection of Aleksandar Tomašević's artwork on the occasion of the centennial of his birth, I have been invited to express my view on his art from a somewhat different perspective. I will try to summarize the impressions his art evokes hoping that this insight will be understood as something more than an attempt to satisfy the vanity of a collector who wants to emphasize his part in paying tribute to the artistic achievements of prominent artists.

The artwork of Aleksandar Tomašević presents a challenge to the viewer as its coherence, rare thoughtfulness, superior plastic shaping of archetypal visual signs forces him to leave his comfort zone of mere observation, and encourages even the layman to try to explain what, for God's sake, affects him so much in these soothing, transposed, even harmless images. Does not every great art do just that, provoke a constant re-examination of the boundaries of both the emotional and intellectual horizons?

About ten years ago, I had the opportunity to see Tomašević's works for the first time. At first, it seemed inexplicit. In such situations, when faced with a creative oeuvre that implies a cultivated viewer's eye and an elaborated receptivity to visual impressions of higher-order, it is good to rely on the help of people with more expertise. I was lucky enough to be encouraged by a friend, who organized the exhibition, to take an interest in Tomašević's visual language. Feeling that beneath a non-communicative, abstractly orchestrated aniconic image perceived at first glance, pulsed a certain warm energy of the image drawn from distant primordial origins, I acquired catalogues of previous exhibitions, read, reflected on the texts constantly returning to the reproduced works.

Tomašević had the good fortune that his work was followed, while in the very process of being produced, by critics whose expertise interpretations significantly contributed to a favorable evaluation of his oeuvre. Insights provided by various authors, most importantly by Stojan Čelić, Mila Rajković, and Radomir Konstantinović enthusiastically testify to the artist's creative process, introduce us to the world of Tomašević's creativity and intellectually convincingly explain the importance of his work for modern art. May I be forgiven, if I appropriate their interpretations in the following text, yet

I am an amateur who certainly lacks the superior insight they have demonstrated inspired by Aleksandar Tomašević's artwork.

Art lovers and collectors have confirmed that they have experienced one impression several times: when looking at a work of a chosen artist, it is necessary for at least one work to produce a visual impression of high intensity that unmistakably recognizes a masterWork. A great painting is similar to supreme poetry, as soon as you see it, read it, you feel that you have encountered a work so suggestive in its cohesion that it is clear to the amateur that it is the culmination of a certain person's creativity. I will try to give my view on the significance of some works from Tomašević's oeuvre, exhibited at the Vasić Gallery, that have undoubtedly left such a strong impression on me.

One of the biggest challenges of abstract painting is to achieve a plastic sign that creates a feeling of fullness while deliberately using limited means of expression. Reduction in imagination, discipline in depiction, refraining from effects of any kind are attributes that achieve nothing in themselves unless guided by the confident hand of a master whose playful imagination is deliberately limited by an intellectually rigorous artistic concept of expression. However, Tomašević's work also expresses a certain warmth, reminiscences of the Mediterranean, reflections of the visual code of the cultural heritage sealed deep within us making it possible to recognize his symbolic representation as something familiar.

Starting from 1963, after briefly experimenting with the semantic possibilities of the Art Informel technique, Aleksandar Tomašević resolutely began a new phase in his artistic oeuvre characterized by both a fully coherent and rarely consistent visual code in the organization of the painted surface and artistic material used that superbly solved the mentioned challenges of abstract representation. The technique was almost exclusively tempera on a wooden panel, the format was almost standardized at 50 x 70 cm, less often 70 x 100 cm. One might argue that by reducing the physical dimensions of the material itself to one or two options the artist showed self-confidence in his choice of expression which was further manifested through an extremely restrictive color scheme on the now exclusively two-dimensional painting surface. It is very significant that the artist, starting from this cycle, titled his works only numerically, which in my opinion is a clear indicator of the artist's will to exclude any self-referentiality in the initial marking. The work become impersonal,

handed over to the public and marked only by a primordial symbolic sign: a number. One of his paintings that, in my opinion, best sublimates the expressive capacities of such a rigorous attitude is *Work 63/38*: we see a dark reflection of the basic black background, where a carefully chosen and positioned symbol whose origin is deeply embedded in the means of expression of folk art, together with the radiance of meticulously cultivated surfaces in a bright field, when viewed for a long time, slowly but surely begins to reveal the impression of a monumental completion. The quality, the tactility of the painting process here only serves to give shape to the procedure used to reach a reality of the higher, I dare say, spiritual order. Who else painted like that? Paul Klee, the Buddha from the Bauhaus. May I be forgiven, if I compare Tomašević with one of the Titans of the artistic constellation of high modernity. But did not they both seek their starting point in the humble mastery of craft techniques, rejecting the hubris of artistic rapture? Klee even painted on a jute bag, he did not need a "gallery" format to create works of such mystical beauty that makes the viewer feel as if faced with the secret of alchemical transformation, unable to find the key but only to anticipate it. Ultimately, the expressive language of both artists manages to correspond, in a rarely authentic way, with the challenges of the period of contemporary art in which they worked.

I think it is important to point out that the impression Tomašević's works evoke never aims to achieve heightened emotionality in the viewer, the affective approval inherent to the perception of the work of artists who in their production have strongly induced sensitivity. It seems as if Tomašević wants to make the viewer focus his gaze on the work, to calm down, to summon silence in which the inner eye suddenly recognizes the genius of simple communication with elementary signs. If the viewer does not want or cannot refocus on that point of initial silence, these works will be boring, uninteresting, too simple... But, if he ever succeeds in doing so, he will have the opportunity to feel the serenity of radiance that has nothing to do with the over-intellectualized reception of art that characterizes the period in which these works were made. Here the impression is more straightforward, by no means effective or affective, but carried by a symbolic representation of a higher order, it produces a feeling of spiritualized peace.

Aleksandar Tomašević came closest in his aspiration to achieve harmony in the last phase of his artistic career that began in 1965 and lasted until his death. Fifty- three of his works from this period were exhibited at his posthumous exhibition in the ULUS Gallery in 1968. His oeuvre was finalized, Čelić said that Tomašević himself told him

that it was his last exhibition. When you look at these works, it becomes clear why he made such a definite decision. These works demonstrate a new sign orientated content, based on a combination of extremely reduced geometric building elements, made of wooden profiles with deepened channels, sometimes painted mostly with basic colors, or even, in my opinion the artistically most relevant works in monochrome compositions. His magnum opus, in my opinion, is best represented by the last work in the exhibition catalog: *Work 65/53*. A white row of rectangular building elements intersected by centrally placed squares and triangles: the perception of which can only be modified by external light falling on this composition. However, the impression the work leaves certainly lies in the fullness, completeness, a monumental quality that is devoid of any need for any kind of ornament. As the Doric pillar does not need any decoration to be perfect, so this painting of tactile presentation, coherence of the artistic idea and certainty in the execution directs the viewer to gain an insight into the initiating power of geometric expression.

Radomir Konstantinović made a very important observation on the very process Tomašević used in creating his works in his preface to the catalog of the mentioned exhibition. He compared Tomašević's assembly procedure with children's play. I think that such a comparison hints at a deeper meaning: if a person plays in the right way, starting from a full understanding of his position in creative composition, with an experientially confirmed intellectual framework that serves as a basis for creation, the end result will be a work of great suggestive power. Friedrich Nietzsche said: "A man reaches maturity when he regains the seriousness that he had as a child at play." I do not know of a more perfect example where human creativity confirms this formulation than the mature oeuvre of Aleksandar Tomašević.

Contextualizing Aleksandar Tomašević's oeuvre into international and time frameworks is a task that far exceeds my abilities. Nevertheless, I would like to draw attention to some features that can somewhat contribute to this task. I will primarily compare his work with the work of some of the artists who have left their mark on the international art scene.

The paintings-objects from the last phase of Tomašević's artistic career are innovative in the execution approach and only a few artists treated problems in painting in a comparable way. In the early sixties, Jan Schoonhoven, a member of the Nul group, created monochrome objects in Amsterdam, characterized by repetitiveness, serial-

ity, complete focus on the multiplication of the basic building element that organize the image of the grid-based structure. Although the starting points of the Nul group within the broader international ZERO movement do not have any correlation with the environment in which Tomašević made his art, when one looks at the individual Works of both artists, in my experience, they leave quite a similar impression on the viewer. There is a sense of meditateness derived from a consequently, strictly thought-out organization of the painting, while at the same time retaining an aura of transposition, warmth, derived from the careful artisan treatment of the building elements. Schoonhoven belonged to an artistic group that drew its basic postulates from the already out lived experiences of Informel, trying to break with the tradition of "great" painting that accentuated the artistic personality, while Tomašević recognizably drew his creative energy from visual codes directly based on the Byzantine and broader Mediterranean tradition, but his interpretation of the artistic legacy is executed in such a consistent, contemporary language-specific way, that it is possible to draw parallels between the end results of their works. They both chose a depersonalized, in some cases completely identical numerical titling for their works, which in their sublime expression transcends the boundaries of time and place and leaves the impression of unadulterated, simple, spiritualized beauty.

Thus, Tomašević's work belongs to that broader Modernist approach which poses and solves painting problems from the position of faith in the significance of *savoir faire*, which follows a tradition deeply rooted in the creative impulses of the artist. At the time of his full artistic maturity, the prevailing tendencies on the international art scene were primarily manifested by American Pop Art, which subversively and with a great deal of cynicism, posed philosophical questions: what can be called an art object, whether processing a banal image of a product like a can of soup by the very act of presenting becomes an artistic fetish? Tomašević was far from such dilemmas, his starting position still embraced the postulate that self-reflexive expression was the cornerstone of creativity. Jean Baudrillard, one of the great polemicists on the nature of contemporary art wrote in one of his texts dealing with the issue of the possibility of restoring the radical illusion as the basis of image that: "Despite all modern superstitions about "liberalization" it must be said that forms are not free: on the contrary they are bound: the only way to free them is to bind them, in other words, these connections must be found, the relationships that keep them in a subtle correlation must be discovered. Moreover, they challenge themselves through interconnections and art must penetrate the intimacy of that process. "I think that Baudrillard's state-

ment is profoundly true and I would say that Tomašević's approach to creativity has to a great degree moved towards such an essential orchestration of form. On the international scene, the circle of artists connected with American abstract expressionism of the second generation tried to solve the problems of painting in such a way. Among them was Agnes Martin, the American painter of Canadian descent, who worked at the same time as Tomašević and whose visual expression can well be compared with Tomašević's work.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Agnes Martin had already perfected a visual expression that was extremely reductive in her use of means, again based on the repetition of grid- structures, which in its best achievements clearly emphasized the intention to reach a transcendent reality through the creative process. The main impression the viewer has, when standing in front of her works, is meditateness, even gentleness. Once more, it is a childish simple sign structure in front of which the viewer remembers the notion of happiness. Despite that simplicity, her signature style was retained, as well as the possibility of flaws, the concept whose significance Radomir Konstantinović found so inspiring in the work of Aleksandar Tomašević.

The significance of the work of the two above-mentioned artists in the last half century has been professionally revalued by extensive studies, organization of retrospective exhibitions in the world's most prominent museums, by their constant presence in the reviews by both professionals and non –experts alike.

The advantage of belonging to the artistic scene of developed, highly cultured societies is obvious. The work of Aleksandar Tomašević, which in an interesting way corresponds to the artistic achievements of Schoonhoven and Martin, in no way lags behind the contribution left by these artists to the world heritage of modern art. His oeuvre is small in scope, his untimely death prevented him from creating a corpus that, with its quantity, would have had a strong effect on the art loving public of one, we must say, small cultural environment to which he belonged. Despite that, highly valuing his achievements in post-war Serbian art, I am newly astonished and disappointed that the representatives of institutions dealing with culture have not done more to reappraise his authentic contributions to our art and culture.

And so, when the experts do not want to do it, it is up to us collectors, amateurs, guardians of our cultural heritage, to try to convey the impression and importance

of Tomašević's art. In my search for a way to verbally unravel the secret of the excellence of this art, I have often been under the impression that these paintings hide a deeply poetic creative essence and, in order to adequately describe their powerful but hidden sensitivity, we need to pay attention to a broader field of interpretation that is beyond the critical insights that are focused on the world of painting.

In my opinion, the immanent poetic quality of these paintings is in their fundamental agreement with the most significant creative contributions in the field of poetry. Vasko Popa published a collection of poems *Secondary Sky* in 1968 -the year of Tomašević's death. Is it appropriate to say that Tomašević painted as Popa sang? In order to understand the importance of creative contributions in the broader artistic field, I will resort to the convincing review of Vasko Popa's work. Predrag Palavestra wrote in his seminal book *Post-War Serbian Literature 1945-1970*, about Popa's poetry "... Using a complicated system to determine the value and meaning of *poetic* symbols - taken from the treasury of folk tales, ancient religions, old Slavic traditions, and even Kabbalistic resolutions of mystical signs - Popa expresses the inner meaning of his *poem* indirectly. The apparent vagueness and at times, the vague mystery of symbols and images in his poetry, indicate that the author does not present the world in an external, logical projection, but as a poetic projection of a legend, fairy tale and dream, where everything is possible... Imbued with personal syntactic structures, the *poetic* language in the book is vivid and clear, flawless in its simplicity. The internal architecture of the *book* is based on a harmonious agreement of rational and poetic impulses... Overcoming the boundaries of the soil and region where it was created, to which it is vitally connected by origin, spirit and form, Vasko Popa's *poetry* has an open dimension to universality. " Perhaps, this gives us an opportunity to play, this time with words; to replace the italicized terms: poetics-painting; poem- image; poetry-painting; book-work of art. Palavestra's sublimation of the meaning and position of Vasko Popa's poetry has thus become an extremely precise instrument for defining the special qualities of Aleksandar Tomašević's painting.

Tomašević's painting, more than a decade after his demise, endures through time and with the passage of time the importance of his original contribution grows and clearly indicates the need for further reevaluation of the position of his work. The text in front of you is devoid of such ambitions, its only aim is to serve as an illustration of the noble influence that artistic creation of the highest order has on individuals who

have the privilege to be, at least temporarily, surrounded by the works of such artists as Aleksandar Tomašević.

Dušan Milovanović

## ALEKSANDAR TOMAŠEVIĆ – BIOGRAPHY

1921 – Born on August 5, Sokobanja, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Completed his elementary and secondary education in Kosovka Mitrovica, Skoplje and Belgrade.

1942 – Graduated from the Teacher's Training School in Belgrade where he also attended the Mladen Josić's Art School (teachers: Jovan Bijelić, Zora Petrović, Franjo Radočaj and Svetolik Lukić).

1944 – Worked as a teacher in a village on Kopaonik, then joined the Ibar Partisan Detachment.

1947 – Enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, FPR of Yugoslavia (graduated in 1952). Professors: Ljubica Sokić, Ivan Tabaković, Nedeljko Gvozdrenović, Kosta Hakman, Mihailo Petrov.

1949 – Attended a one semester fresco workshop at the *Ecole nationale superieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, France.

1952/ 62 – Worked in the Federal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Belgrade.

1952/ 53 – Continued to study conservation and restoration of paintings at the Louvre with Robert Miller.

1955 – Specialized conservation and restoration of paintings at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels, Belgium with Albert Philippot.

Worked on the conservation and restoration of paintings (oil on canvas), icons, the discovery, conservation, presentation and copying of Serbian medieval frescos. Worked in the St. Sophia Church in Ohrid, the Presentation of Holy Mother of God Church in Lipljan, St. Peter's Church in Bjelo Polje, St. Apostles Church in the Peć Patriarchate and in the following monasteries: Morača, Gračanica and Hilandar in Mont Athos, Greece.

Was a member of the art groups: Samostalni (the Independent) and Decembarska grupa (December Group).

Had a rich collection of folk pottery he collected throughout his life.

1961 – Was awarded the Order of Labor with a Silver Wreath.

1962 – Was assistant professor and then associate professor at the Academy of Applied Arts in Belgrade for the subject of Monumental Painting. Holding the position until his death.

1968 – Died in Belgrade on the 19th of June. Posthumously was awarded the Belgrade October Award for Fine Arts.

1969 – The Faculty of Applied Arts established an Aleksandar Tomašević Award for Best Student's Work.

## KATALOG / CATALOGUE

1. *Delo 63 / Work 63*, 1964, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 50x35cm

2. *Delo 63/3 / Work 63/3*, 1964, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 70x50cm

3. *Delo 63/54 / Work 63/54*, 1964, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 62x85cm

4. *Delo 63/19 / Work 63/19*, 1965, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 70x50cm

5. *Delo 63/23 / Work 63/23*, 1965, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 50x70cm

6. *Delo 63 / Work 63*, 1966, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 70x50cm

7. *Delo 63/38 / Work 63/38*, 1966, tempera na panel ploči / tempera on panel board, 50x70cm

8. *Delo 65/5 / Work 65/5*, 1967, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 70x50cm

9. *Delo 65/9 / Work 65/9*, 1967, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 70x50cm

10. *Delo 65/11 / Work 65/11*, 1967, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 50x70cm

11. *Delo 65/17 / Work 65/17*, 1967, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 70x50cm

12. *Delo 65/19 / Work 65/19*, 1968, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 70x50cm

13. *Delo 65/51 / Work 65/51*, 1968, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 150x70cm

14. *Delo 65/53 / Work 65/53*, 1968, bojeni kanelirani elementi od drveta / colored fluted wooden elements, 70x150cm

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