

Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts  
Doctoral School

Mural techniques, renewal tradition in personal context

DLA theses

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Introduction

The word "mural" is of latin origin, it means pertaining to or supported by a wall, painting or decoration on a wall, or, in a broader context, it is a collective term for works of art (regardless of technique) that are realized on a wall, ceiling or some other permanent surface. Before the international spread of the term "mural", in its meaning related to wall-art, works of art made on a wall were referred to as "monumetal painings" (mosaic, wall-painting, glass-painting) or were simply called by their technique. My connection to mural techniques and the follow-up research rooted from my work as an artist and the will to bring them up-to-date. My theses are as follows:

Thesis 1. The creative process, the process of painting starts at the grounding. The groundings and base surfaces I use determine what base of paint, vehicle, medium, or varnish will be used. My multi-year study aimed at experiments into new wall-painting applications. It consisted of experiments, application tests, and development of new techniques:

1. Experiments with new base surfaces.
2. Traditional and new, synthetic bound techniques, sand-blast surfaces.
3. Experiemnt into new techniques.
4. Application of new, synthetic based thin plaster on several types of surfaces.

That is about non-convetional groundings and base surfaces that are not normally used by artists. The carrier surfaces and materials I have experienced with are partially capable of supporting conventional mural techniques (fresco, secco, sgraffito), and also allow for novel and combined applications.

Thesis 2. In my opinion, in the 20th century artists integrate the application of new materials and techniques into their repertoire thus helping the formation of new forms of expression and personal visions. I think, following the enhancements of techniques, artists have new opportunities to experiment with novel materials, with their applications and integration into new artistic programmes. As a result, we can conclude that some artists integrate mural techniques with their own autonomous art, or seek to broaden their choices in use of certain materials and tools.

Thesis 3. According to my experiments conventional murals (fresco, secco, sgraffito) can be made on new kinds of base surfaces; and, vice versa, conventional brick walls can also support murals on synthetic based plasters. In my opinion, the form of expression of a mural can be made from an entirely new point of view, with a unique style and artistic approach. It is common practice in modern art that a work of art is born from the combination of different materials, procedures, and techniques, because artists feel and know that the abundance of techniques and their mix provide them with an inexhaustible set of tools.

Thesis 4. Based on the formerly known painting techniques I concluded that there is an interoperability between certain techniques of panel and mural painting. In my experiments with materials I deliberately sought ways of applying traditional mural techniques on new types of surfaces. The majority of the experiments were into wall-painting techniques, as extending them to all mural genres would have been overwhelming. This topic is all the more current as most contemporary buildings have a walling with supplementary insulators which makes the usage of traditional mural techniques impossible on the external facades and internal plasterings.

Thesis 5. Experiments with materials and new surfaces have always been an important part of my work. I have been drawn to trying a well-known material or technique under extreme circumstances, or the other way round, experimenting with a new material on a well-known type of surface. I have been searching for the most expressive materials and techniques for my visual concepts. I developed a novel kind of sgraffito that is close to pictorial sgraffito. I provide more detail on this technique in chapter 8.3 "Experiments of a new technique."

Thesis 6. I reckon mural techniques play an important role in joining different branches of art by providing overlap and passage between genres. For instance, a sgraffito with multiple colored layers is rather like a relief regarding the implementation, while an engraved sgraffito or plaster-intarsia has more of a graphic perspective. Good examples for the latter are the ornaments of the maisonettes at Kodály Körönd reminiscent of the facades of Tuscan renaissance palaces, and the scratched sgraffito on the facade of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts. Both are designed by Lajos Rausher, the figural parts are created by Bertalan Székely.

Thesis 7. Monumentality, regardless of era, was always accompanied by some sort of timelessness and continuity. A fresco by Giotto impresses the modern man as much as a cave painting, regardless of the 27,000 years in between. I believe a mural, however worn or fragmented, provides full aesthetic pleasure to the modern man, because time transforms the worn wall into new aesthetic value. In recent years, during my experiments with materials and techniques I gained knowledge which I will be able to use in my future projects of murals and panel-paintings alike. My masterwork is an example of the above statement. What being directly in contact with materials means to me is timeless continuity.