

Geometric prehistoric motifs in the mural art of Kosovo

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The abstract

This paper addresses prehistoric murals content in the Balkans with special emphasis those in the territory of Kosovo. In Kosovo, murals are located in town of Ferizaj. The dominant figures in this mural are: the Goddess sitting on the Throne, Urns, anthropomorphic masks of the Neolithic period, geometric shapes in vases and various objects, e. The authors have made an interweaving between the figures and the compositional alignment, while the colors are completely independent of the figures. The purpose is to show the importance of prehistory as inspiration for modern artists. The murals that were taken for consideration are those, which artists have taken prehistoric onomastic elements. The paper examined the spiral, zigzag lines used mostly as elements in this mural. It is known that murals and graffiti have been illegal arts that were used to protest and express the revolt of a people. The main emphasis in this paper is also gender equality in Kosovo, because it deals with the figure of Queen Teuta, who was a very brave, independent woman. The goddess sitting on the throne is also presented, which represents the important prehistoric period of the Neolithic era where man had the will to become the God of nature.

Keywords: Art, mural, colors, lines, shapes, archeology, history, traditional

Introduction

Murals and graffiti occupy an important place throughout the territory of Kosovo. Most of them have political, economic, social and cultural content. It has always been a tradition for murals to be used for reasons of dissatisfaction and in most cases, graffiti were drawn in urban spaces in Kosovo. They have been a sign of revolt against the government as well as other social, legal and economic problems. Whereas, in this paper attention was given to the review of the cultural awareness, prehistoric murals and women's rights.

The city of Ferizaj is immersed in the colors of this art, attracting all art-lovers around the world. Murals have become the newest tourist attraction in some cities of the country, where the curious eye of the citizens is amazed by the colors, the elements combination and especially by the messages that this art transmits.

A few decades ago, graffiti, simple inscriptions, mostly messages, protest or worship, sometimes accompanied by illustration/drawing, appeared at night in the biggest cities, while their authors, due to many reasons, remained anonymous. This was a basic form of what later became mural art. In that world, there was no law or regulation that would enable talented artists, amateurs or professionals, to legally, through mural art, express the feelings of the moment, respect for any personality, cynicism, affirmative attitude or humor for any event, or simply give a message. Today, mural art is legal, moreover, especially in urban environments, it is also encouraged. In Kosovo, there are now several non-governmental organizations that gather young artists, who with their skills decorate the gray space of half-ruined buildings or underpasses, rough concrete fences near the streets, the walls of institutions or cafeterias.



Fig.1 Mural "Goddess in the Throne"

Frequently in Kosovo, when murals and graffiti are created, a theme is set, but in some cases, artists are also free to express their fantasies through their hands. In some cases, murals are used to decorate gloomy spaces, but after a while, the restoration of these murals is missing. The topic that is elaborated in the paper is based on the research of the artistic side of the murals, the analysis of prehistoric figures by referring to texts with famous authors and competences. Art is intertwined with history and the expected result is that the power of art can penetrate everywhere to concretize the silent values as they are in this case: the figurine of the Goddess, Queen Teuta, Anthropomorphic Masks, Prehistoric Geometry. What perhaps sets it apart from the theme of the murals, are the colors, lines, contrasts, combinations, nuances that affect postmodern art.

Goddess on the Throne in the mural

In the mural "Goddess on the Throne", the figure of the Goddess is presented as a silhouette in three different positions. The first is in phase, the second is a reflection from the first and the third is upside down. The structure and space are connected to the light-shadow and the indigo color, and it creates the impression that this figurine in itself contains fragments manifested towards the effort to achieve the pictorial effects between the painting and the mural. Then, in these fields, the reflexes of the basic element appear, that is, the lines with the form which strain the image, and then the color as the goddess of the image. Beyond this composition we also have the eagle with an illustrative light indigo. Both figures are rich in artistic and figurative content. The color, shape and drawing are the experimental trichotomy of artists.

This mural reflects a modern substantive language both figuratively and aesthetically. They achieve a harmonization of the elements, always aiming for the three-dimensional compositional structure which is achieved through the implementation of the element of light, both natural and artificial. So, in this compositional entirety, through values, are gained three-dimensional compositional plans by penetrating three-dimensional depth or figurative perspective. Undoubtedly, this phase is much more fruitful and prosperous both in terms of content and also figuratively. The shapes in the mural reflect moving silhouettes both horizontally and vertically, that is, a proportional disharmony within the artistic composition. In terms of expressive spirit, in terms of content and modern spirit with deformations and abstraction, both in the figural and compositional aspects. The colors are more perfect with a dominance of the color spectrum and the deformed shape which is conveyed from picture to picture.

Historically, the figure of the Goddess sitting on the throne is considered one of the most important figures in Kosovo, and it has even become a symbol of the city of Pristina. This terracotta belongs to the Culture of Vinča, which was discovered in the place called "Tjerrtorja". The Neolithic site of "Tjerrtorja" was identified accidentally in the 50's of the last century, when the factory started to be built, known as the cotton and textile production plant "Tjerrtorja" (Berisha 2012). The head of the figurine is pentagonal with sharp facial contours; the eyes are almond-shaped.

Two additional holes appear on each wing, although the purpose is not clear. The figure wears an amulet around its neck and after finished, was painted with red paint. The figurine belongs to the Vinca culture and dates back to 5700-4500 BC. The figurine is 18.5 cm high. The figurine represents the figure of a female deity or, according to Maria Gimbutas, the "Cult of the Great Mother". Gimbutas identifies these figures as embodiments of the great goddess (Gimbutas 1982) the term great goddess must be understood in a holistic way, as the personification of the principles of the order of nature including control over the order of nature (Harmann 2021).

In the mural "Anthropomorphic Masks", we notice the figurative principle, i.e. shape, color, light-shadow and reflection. Masks pose with the language of illustration, theme of metaphor. They are full-face and profile, sometimes with a body and sometimes half-faced, that is, the part of the nose joined to the forehead while the part of the mouth and chin has been removed. It is a game of artistic concepts, not substantive theoretical goals. The colors are light illustrative without nuances and tonalities, so indigo is pure yellow and ocher are uniform in content and reflection. This composition expresses the element of color, without any coloristic structure, with direct shapes, somewhere even in the foreground the symbolism that expresses the abstract expressive-associative spirit is emphasized. Always applying in this color range, the



Fig. 2 Mural "Anthropomorphic Mask".

element of light, which originates from the exalted spirit of the creators and harmonizes with other elements of the compositions. This symbol is taken from the prosomorphic caps which represent the religious world of prehistoric people.

This anthropomorphic mask belongs to the Neolithic period and is dated somewhere around 5000 - 4500 BC. The material of the work is baked clay and made with excellent motifs and ornaments. This artifact was found in Fafos and has dimensions of 17.5 x 16 cm and today it is kept in the National Museum of Belgrade, while a copy of it is exhibited in the Museum of Kosovo (Hajdari & Berisha 2021).

Anthropomorphic caps constitute a special type of Vinca art. These are unusual cylindrical objects with the appearance of human or animal faces containing eyes, noses, ears and various decorations. It seems that this had an important role in human life during the Neolithic period, which was used as a cover for dishes, but also as cult masks and objects with apotropaic function (Hajdari & Berisha 2021)

The figures do not communicate with each other, they are independent within their own self. They stand as monumental expressions within the two-dimensional space, beyond abstraction and with illustrative emphasis. The mural is full of details, life, events, finds and beautiful

shots coming from the narrative and beyond it with static silhouettes that are evoked by the highlights of symbols and double meanings, sometimes metaphorical and sometimes real. The forces of art here make the figures explicable, although the artists are freer in the philosophical meaning of color by making it pollen, then color. They look like sketches, they are sketches expressing themselves as a connecting bridge through the past and the present, i.e. the cultural heritage of the figures, while the modern compositions represent the abstract spirit. The goal is aesthetics which makes you explore the importance of the culture of our society. These transformations have not only resulted in aesthetically pleasing works of art, but also promote the preservation and understanding of cultural heritage. It is a fusion between traditional and modern.

“By exposing and preserving these motifs in modern times, younger generations connect with their cultural roots and better understand their history. By incorporating traditional motifs into modern art, we aim to create a bridge between the past and the present, showing how cultural heritage can continue to evolve and adapt. This highlights the importance of the culture of our society and fosters an understanding and appreciation for the latter.” Writes on the main page of “MuralFest Kosova”.



Fig.4: Mural “Queen Teuta”.

The main purpose of the mural with the portrait “Queen Teuta” is as a concept of girls in Kosovo protesting and demanding gender equality. Since during antiquity there were no women in decision-making positions, in ancient Illyria we have Teuta. “We dedicate it to you and all the other girls, to remind them that you can achieve anything you want.” Written in his page. Her portrait stands like a mural in front of us. The light falls on her face, her gray hair and a part of yellow show the connection of the modern with the ancient. Freedom of expression through color as a concept that represents the limitless limits and history, i.e. the roots of the picture. Strongly drawn from realist art, a realism like the tendrils of the great Greek masters who focused on the details of the body and musculature, Teuta succeeds and fills in contours rather than shading and facial muscles. The nose, lips and chin represent the high artistic master if the artist touches them with precision, diligence and work. In this case, the power of copying from the silhouette of Teuta

is achieved to a degree, while the details still require work to reach the absolute.

Teuta was a prominent noble in antiquity, she is known as the wife of King Agron, a king in the Ardiian Kingdom. She was an important personality of Illyrian history. In 231 AD, Agroni died suddenly, after a victory over the Aetolians. After his death Teuta came to reign the Ardiian Kingdom. She reigned for only 3 years, yet the work and glory of this woman has triumphed over the centuries. With her coming to power, she began with the territorial expansion of her kingdom. However, during her reign, she clashed with the Roman Republic, which had set its sights on conquering the Balkan Peninsula. She was forced to leave her kingdom after the First Illyrian-Roman War. Queen Teuta played an important historical role, she developed the Illyrian state and during her time Illyria was considered a powerful state (Elsie 2015).



Fig.5: Mural "Prehistoric Geometry"

Many details, unreal geometric shapes, lined, processed in the mural "Prehistoric Geometry" expressing stylization, artistic embroidery reflecting prehistoric symbols. The composition is unreal, mystical, subject to a world that neither the mind nor the feelings will convey. There is no reason to comment on the feelings, much less to correct it, because there you will encounter the limitation of what tries to dominate in freedom, this freedom raised on the pedestal of the space that is engulfed by the form, but why should it not be engulfed, when we know that the space subject to each. The symphony really waves out and lines, it even creates a rhyme between the color, the line, the line and the motif. There, everyone will find an element of their own, be it pagan, mythical, historical, postmodern, whatever it may be, the main thing is touch, conception, and curiosity to continue and consume art.

In this mural we find life a little colorful, not at all the same, subjected to a contrast, such as form, line, harmony, disharmony, the real, which is masked under the unreal, but in any case, it exists and rises in relation to biological time, physical and artistic. The illustrative light blue creates a harmony with the celled purple, sometimes even scaled, in the shaped parts such as vases, spirals. The spirals are marked with natural white and neutral black because of the contrasts between the shades of background blue, gray and purple. It is an interweaving of prehistoric and postmodern. The archeological content of the figures evokes the thought of going back in time, while the compositional layout and colors are postmodern. Here we have an artistic freedom



Fig.6: Urn decorated with geometric ornaments

because art itself has such a mission. The regular movement of geometric shapes in many horizontal parts, but also vertical until the corners of the walls are slanted, creates the rhythm of the form. Regular rhythm. The focus is also on the contours of the forms, in some cases it even dominates. The richness of the content, the compositional openness, the purity, the sensibility of the line, being supported by the colors, make the form constitutive of the compositional figures in this mural.

Geometric motifs have had symbolic or magical meanings which have been proven by ethnologists, who have observed this phenomenon while studying the primitive cultures of Africa, Asia and South America (Stipčević 2002). Through the zig-zag lines they represent the snake, some lightning, fire, the river, the triangle usually represents the vulva. (Stipčević 2002). Zigzag lines are apparently among the most common decorative elements in Paleolithic and Mesolithic decorative art, and although it would be risky to interpret them all as snake symbols, there is a reasonable basis for assuming that the popularity of the zigzag pattern is for due to its generally accepted role as a powerful warning symbol (Petersen 2021). The zigzag lines shown in this mural are taken from the lapydes urns, who lived along the Adriatic coast in today's Istria (fig...) The appearance of the zigzag lines in this urn is related to the symbol of the snake. There were cases when it was also explained as a symbol of lightning.

The spiral is one of the most frequent motifs which has been used since the Paleolithic until today. Dishes were decorated

with it in pre-Pharaonic Egypt, in the Creto-Mycenaean culture, ceramics of the Neolithic period, and especially in Central Europe. Patterns of spirals can be found in significant quantities in pottery vessels of the Neolithic period in East Asia and the Far East (Zhushchikhovskaya 2008). The spiral motif occupies a special place in the ornamental motifs in the megalithic temples of the Neolithic era on the island of Malta as well as in the Megalithic cemeteries of Western Europe (Bonano 2014). The motif of the spiral which is used in the mural fest is taken from the stone architectural part in Nesactium (Istria, Croatia) (fig. >>) which may have met a prehistoric shrine (Stipčević 2002). The spiral motif is known as the appearance of the urns of the Japod tribe. The appearance of this motif in monuments related to the mortal world shows that the spiral symbolizes the underground, the complicated path that the human soul is forced to take in this world (Stipčević 2002). The motif of the top can also be found in the shelter known as "Mrizi i Kobot", which is located near the archaeological site of Vlashnja in the Municipality of Prizren. The shelter dates to the period between the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age (3600 – 2000) (Shukriu 2010). The image of spirals is associated with the worship of the Sun, the virtual circle of life, (Shukriu 2010). It should be mentioned that the symbolism of the sun dominates in the societies of the Bronze Age in the Balkans. (Shukriu 2006).

The figure of the spiral appears in more than ten cases. The spirals are found scattered in the rock shelter and two of them are touched with each other, thus creating the image of a "double spiral" (Krasniqi 2006). On these drawings, the prehistoric hunter performed certain rituals so that he could secure abundant prey (Korkuti 2008). The prehistoric character of the painting is determined not only by the hunting scenes, but also by the red ink of its realization, which in prehistoric times was clothed with mystical-religious qualities. Guva e Vlashnjes represents the place of cult of the inhabitants of Vlashnja and can be dated in the time span from the late Neolithic to the Bronze Age (Alderhaug 2000).

The motif of zigzag wavy lines, apart from having a decorative character, served prehistoric man to represent the snake. The most typical example of this motif can be found in Japod urns

Conclusion

The accomplishment of research results in this paper is the interweaving of art with prehistoric figures. Even today people are not very interested in bringing prehistoric figures to life, but the power of art makes them aesthetic, interesting and curious for new generations. The murals presented in the murals of the city of Ferizaj present a multitude of geometric motifs that were also used by prehistoric people. Therefore, through the murals, people, especially young people, can also learn about prehistory.

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