

Belu-Simion Făinaru

Nothingness - The Poetics of Void

Opening: February 28, 19 – 21 h

February 28 – April 7, 201

Tuesday – Friday, 16 – 19 h

The Paintbrush Factory

Str. Henri Barbusse 59–61, 400616 Cluj, Romania

Galeria Plan B is pleased to announce the second solo exhibition of Belu-Simion Făinaru (after the exhibition *More or less* in the same place or another, Belu-Simion Făinaru and Victor Man, Cluj, 2007), which will be on view from February 28 to April 7 in the gallery's space in Cluj.

The exhibition is accompanied by a text signed by Moshe Idel, the renowned philosopher and researcher of the Kabbala, born in Romania and working as a professor in Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The artistic practice of Făinaru is influenced by the dialogue he has since many years with the renowned philosopher.

Făinaru works in various domains of visual art, creating three-dimensional works and video through the objects and environments he designs. While constructing layers of meaning that touch upon Jewish-Romanian history, text, and issues of identity and territory, his works sensitively and deeply address universal human themes. They constitute a complex tapestry of contrasts and contradictions that characterize life, dealing with subjects such as wandering and home, religion and secularity, sanity and madness, memory and forgetting, language and visual art.

Born 1959 in Romania, Belu-Simion Făinaru lives and works in Haifa, Israel and Antwerpen, Belgium; he holds a B.A. degree in Art and Philosophy from Haifa University and a M.F.A. in Art and Design from University of Chicago, USA. Further studies include Domus Academy, Milan, Italy and the Bruxelles Royal Academy of Art, Belgium.

Făinaru's works were exhibited at the 1992 Documenta in Kassel, the 1993 Venice Biennale, the Sonsbeek Biennale in Holland and the 2006 Biennale in Havana, Cuba. Previous solo exhibitions include Israel Museum in Jerusalem, S.M.A.K. Museum in Ghent, M HKA in Antwerpen, Lehmbruck Museum in Germany and Saitama Museum in Japan.

He is a guest lecturer at universities in Belgium and Japan, and has been teaching in the Department of Architecture at the Wizo Academy, Haifa, Israel since 1984.

Since 2010 Belu-Simion Făinaru has been the artistic director and curator of the Mediterranean Biennale of Contemporary Art, Israel.

The Depths of Nothingness

Text by Moshe Idel

One of the main characteristics of the Kabbalistic theosophy is the resort of many authors to terms that include negative senses, in order to describe the feature of the highest levels of Deity. The well-known term *Ein Sof*, translated as infinity, is compounded of the negation, 'Ain, no, nihil, and *Sof*, which means end, that creating the medieval Hebrew phrase of endlessness. In many cases, the first divine manifestation, or the first *sefirah*. Commonly known as *Keter*, or *Crown*, is also described as 'Ain, translated in any cases as nothingness. However, these semantic issues do not address the conceptual framework of the Kabbalistic theosophy. Those thinkers were concerned more with conveying a fullness of existence, similar to what is known in Latin medieval thought as *hyperesse*, or the fullness of being. Negative is more an issue related to the deficiency of the human cognitive capacities to understand the infinite range of that fullness. Indeed, in some cases, the more positive nature of the source of all being is described by Kabbalists by resorting to the Hebrew phrase *'Imqei ha-'Ain*, that should be translated as "the depths of nothingness", namely the unfathomed sources of all being, to which what was emanated and created, strive to return. Those Kabbalists, who wrote their treatises between; late 13th century and mid-16th century, rely on an anonymous treatise entitled *Sefer ha-Yihud*, the book of Unity, which has presumably been written in late 13th century

Castile. According to one of the audacious statements found in Sefer ha-Yihud, there is an isomorphic correspondence between the limbs of human body, created in the image of God, and the revealed divine structure, or the divine image, or the ten sefirot, each corresponding to a divine limb. The human limbs perform the commandments, which strengthen the divine limbs above, and hold them in the proper position, necessary to govern the world. Those divine limbs strive to return to their source within the divine nothingness, following a vision found in Neoplatonism. When someone does not perform the commandments, the divine limb is absorbed within the depths of the nothingness:

"For when the lower man blemishes one of his limbs, as that limb is blemished below it is as if he cuts the corresponding supernal limb. And the meaning of this cutting is that the limb is cut, and becomes more and more contracted, and is gathered to the depths of Being, called Nothingness, as if that limb is missing above. For when the human form is perfect below, it brings about perfection above; [in the same manner] the impurity of the limb below causes the gathering of the image of that supernal limb into the depths of Nothingness, so as to blemish the supernal form, as it is written "Because of the evil, the righteous is taken away" [Isaiah 57:1.] - taken away, literally."

MS. Milano-Ambrosiana 62, fol. 112b.

The correspondence between human and Divine anthropos is here the clue to the mechanism of expansion and contraction in the supernal world. A perfect body below induces perfection above; impurity compels the ingathering of a certain divine limb. According to the anonymous Kabbalist, the higher structure is conditioned by the purity or impurity below. However, it must be emphasized that the focus of the Kabbalistic discussions is neither the glorification of the structure of the limbs, nor even their dignity. It is the issue related to the impact of purity and impurity, of performance of the commandments or their neglect, that is its main concern. The human structure is, in potentia, prone to perfect the divine structure or to cause its contraction; thus, action is the clue to the understanding of human influence. Here, limbs are no more than tools for the performance of the theurgical ritual, aimed at keeping the theosophical structure in its perfect position. The performance of the commandments is conceived of here – at least indirectly – as making the Godhead. The gist of this daring statement must be comprehended against its background; the commandments are the way to cause the divine powers to expand, an action tantamount to "making" the divine pleroma. A younger contemporary of the author of Sefer ha-Yihud, writing in early 14th century, expresses this same theory in a more explicit manner:

"For my husband is not at home, he is gone a long journey" - that he will return to the depth of Being, "in the city of desolation and destruction." For whosoever blemishes below causes thereby a real destruction... and whoever purifies [himself], builds... and the Midrash [states]: "Whoever keeps my commandments, I regard him as if he made Me."

R. Abraham ben Hananel of Eskira, Sefer Yesod 'Olam, MS. Moscow-Gu'nzburg, 607 fol. 69b.

The phrase "depths of Being" is a precise parallel of the depths of nothingness. In both cases, it is fullness, not a negation that is imagined to exist on high.

Unlike the gist of the negative theology, that removed the highest divine worlds from the human knowledge, and conceived it to be the place of perfection, in Kabbalistic theosophies, it is the revelation of the image of God within the divine manifestations, necessary for the maintenance of the world, that is conceived of as perfection. This perfection is obtained by performance and not by some form of knowledge, or transcendence of knowledge. It is the responsibility of keeping the revealed divinity in its revealed status, after it emerged out of the fullness. It is not the return in the source or the absorption within the supernal world that is conceived of as the ideal, but the maintenance a lower image of God by means of performance. What Neoplatonism conceived of as perfection as Nothingness, was imagined by Kabbalist as destruction, because even the divine nothingness, that is fullness, is conceived of as a negation of this world.

For more information, please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro and +40.740.658555.