

Romanian flavor of an American painter

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Abstract: This article presents, in the context of his life work as a heterogeneous artist, some art pieces with Romanian inspiration created by the American artist Jerry W. McDaniel. Sketches, animations, posters, and paintings on subjects like: the Maramures wooden gates, Lucian Blaga's and Ana Blandiana's poems, Ion Tuculescu, and the tennis player Ilie Nastase. From expressive ink sketches, watercolors and acrylic paintings, to beautiful poster designs, Mr. McDaniel's "Romanian flavor" work is part of a very rich artistic life of this New York – Los Angeles painter for over half a century. Mr. McDaniel gives to the Romanian subjects the same expressiveness of his skilled flowing line, in the drawings, and the same appeal, brightness, and liveliness of all his other colorful paintings.

1. Introduction

Sometimes elements of an ethnical culture are made known to the world by persons who are not from that country. One of these cases is the Japanese photographer Kosei Miya who fell in love with Maramures, and was the first to introduce this region to the Western world in the exhibition "La Roumanie des quatre saisons" at the "Muse de l'Home" in Paris, 1997 [1]. The Roumanian Blouse (iie) was made famous in France by Matisse, by his painting with the same name "La Blouse Roumaine" which he did in 1940, followed by a series of representations of women wearing Romanian blouses. Matisse discovered the beauty of the "iie" from the gifts given to him by Theodor Pallady, the Romanian painter whom he befriended since the time they were studying together at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (1891-1900) [2].

2. McDaniel's Romanian Subjects

2.1. Before exposure to Romanian Culture

Like in Matisse's case, a strike of fate exposed Jerry W. McDaniel [3,4,5,6], a New York and Los Angeles artist, 100%

non-Romanian, to Romanian culture, and like the French Master, McDaniel started creating several pieces of art on Romanian topics.



Figure 1. Tennis poster

It is interesting that McDaniel had a Romanian subject in the 50's, when, while doing the entire advertisement campaign in South America for Philip Morris/Marlboro, he created a sports poster in which the name of Nastase appeared, way before the latter became a world-class tennis player. The poster was shown for the first time at the Fashion Institute of Technology FIT/SUNY in New York, where Mr. McDaniel was a professor and the Chair of the Advertising Design department, in an exhibition of a series of 14 posters. The exhibition travelled across the country and

ended up at the Columbus College of Art and Design where the artist studied. The whole series was donated to the CCAD where it was used for years as an educational device for students.

2.2. After exposure to Romanian Culture

2.2.1 Blaga-inspired Paintings

In 2008, McDaniel was commissioned to create stage background images for a poetry recital tour in California of Lidia Lazu, an artist from Bucharest. He created an entire series of small acrylic paintings on paper after poems by Lucian Blaga which were enlarged and used in projections [7]. One of these paintings, “I want to dance” after Blaga’s poem with the same name, evolved into a series of six acrylic paintings on canvas. McDaniel was invited to present the series at “The Dialogue of the Arts” event organized by the Atheneum Foundation in Dusseldorf, Germany, 2-3 December, 2011 [8]. The paintings were presented again in a solo exhibition at the Klein Art Academy in Beverly Hills, Ca in September 2012 [9].



Figure 2. Jerry W. McDaniel and Ileana Costea next to the “I want to dance” series of paintings, Dusseldorf, December 2011.

2.2.2. Salon ARTIS and European nightscapes

In 2010 Mr. McDaniel was invited as Guest of Honor at the Salon ARTIS held in Bucharest. Mr. McDaniel created the art for the cover of the catalog [10] and the poster of that exhibition and presented two of his

six European nightscape paintings, “Amsterdam at 4am” and “Eiffel Tower Everywhere” [11]. The nightscapes were created by Jerry W. McDaniel in his studio in Montparnasse, They were based on sketches he made during various trips to Europe, 2010-2011. Jerry’s European nightscapes painting integrated very well in that show since the theme was architecture and art. “The special trait of Jerry’s nightscapes is their impressionistic character. He goes beyond the realistic elements of his subject and reaches a more general meaning. The nightscapes are very courageous paintings.” (Ion & Lidia Lazu)

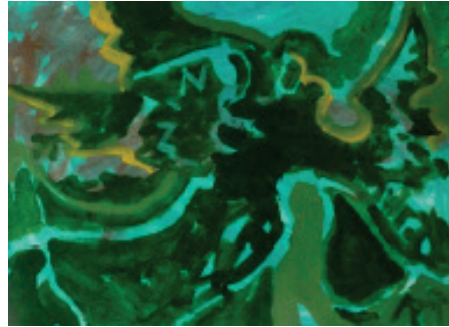


Figure 3. “I want to dance - green”, ©JWM



Figure 4.

Jerry W. McDaniel in his studio creating the design for Salon ARTIS 2010.



Figure 5. The European nightscapes series, 20109-2011, ©JW McDaniel

2.2.3. Maramures Gates and art based on research

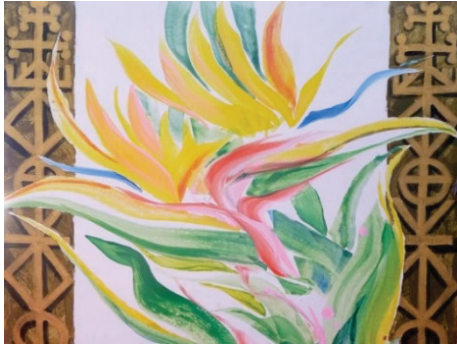


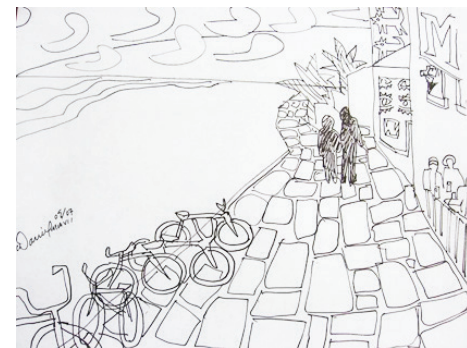
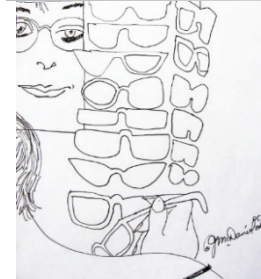
Figure 6. “Bird of Paradise and Maramures gate”, ©JWMcDaniel’2009, Topala private collection, Paris, France

The “Romanian inspiration journey” of Mr. McDaniel continued. The golden structure in the size of a real Maramures wooden gate by Romanian Sculptor Mircea Cantor [12] he saw at a large show of contemporary art in the Grand Palais, Paris, gave McDaniel the idea of a painting he was doing for a Romanian Couple whose daughter studied in Los Angeles. McDaniel wanted to combine Romanian elements with Southern Californian ones. This was how the painting “Bird of Paradise and Maramures gate” was born. This painting is an example of the numerous art pieces that McDaniel created based on research. With many years of experience as an illustrator, graphic designer, and advertising personality McDaniel seems to have an uncanny ability to create art based on research in a contemporary surrealism style, be it portraiture, landscapes, abstracts, hence the heterogeneous artist [13].

2.2.4. Color and repetitive elements Tuculescu and McDaniel

Browsing through an album of Tuculescu’s art [14], Jerry W. McDaniel discovered with pleasure the two things the Romanian Master and he have in common: the bold use of strong, bright colors, and

the expressivity of repetitive geometric elements. He immediately made some drawings in pen, but with Southern California subjects, the madness of freeways and the famous Venice Beach: “Yin-Yang California Freeways”, “Looking at you”, and “Bicycles at Venice Beach”. They are sketches in black and white. “One day in the near future I plan to go back to these sketches and make them into colorful paintings.” (Jerry W. McDaniel)



“These three drawings in pen by Jerry W. McDaniel can be considered as a comment on how Tuculescu sees the world. In his sketches the American painter caught the repetitive character of the elements in the Tuculescu’s art. The well-known paintings of Tuculescu’s

“eyes of the field” series and

Figures 8, 9, 10 Sketches inspired from Tuculescu’s paintings ©JWM 2009

seem to have inspired Jerry’s drawing “Looking at you”, where the woman’s eye is reflected in the mirror next to the multitude of sunglasses. The drawing

“Bicycles at Venice Beach” strengthens the idea of repetition, showing the stones, the clouds and the waves as compositions of line, shapes, and texture in mysterious communication with each other. Then, what is literally organic in nature, the sphericity and bilateral symmetry appearing so often in Tuculescu’s paintings, which must have been what the Master saw in the laboratory under microscope (Did you know he was a microbiologist?) are suggested by Jerry McDaniel’s “Yin-Yang California Freeways’ drawing.” (Lidia and Ionu Lazu)

3. Sickle and hammer



Figure 11. Broken symbol of Communism
©JW McDaniel 1970

Yet one more interesting discovery, in McDaniel’s work: one can even find some “behind the iron curtain” unconscious inspiration. In the 60’s Jerry has made a series of 15 large circle paintings, some of which he presented in a solo exhibition at the Valley Performance Arts Center (VPAC) in October 2013, at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) [15]. At the Opening Reception a Romanian architect friend living in Los Angeles, Dino Tudor, baptized one of Jerry’s large circles “Broken Communism Symbol”. “I just returned from a trip to the former Soviet Union, Dino told Jerry. To me, Maestro, it is clear what you wanted to represent in this painting: the inverted “sickle and

hammer” symbol; that communism has been broken” [16].

4. Recent Romanian subjects

Ana Blandiana’s poems

The most recent Romanian-influenced artistic activity of McDaniel’s sketches and paintings to illustrate Ana Blandiana’s beautiful poems. He found them in English translation and was thrilled by their visual expressiveness. These paintings will be shown at the private reception organized by Ileana Costea at IC ART House-Gallery in Encino (opening of this new gallery too), on the occasion of the visit to Los Angeles of the well-known Romanian writers Ana Blandiana and Romulus Rusan on June 14, 2015.

They trundle by on roller skates
With earphones droning in their ears
And their eyes glued to monitors,
Unaware that the leaves are falling now
And the birds are flying away.

...
*While God Comes down
And learns to roller skate
In order to save them.*

Fragment from the poem “On Roller Skates” by Ana Blandiana Translated from Romanian by Paul Scott Derrick and Viorica Patea From volume: *My Native Land A4*

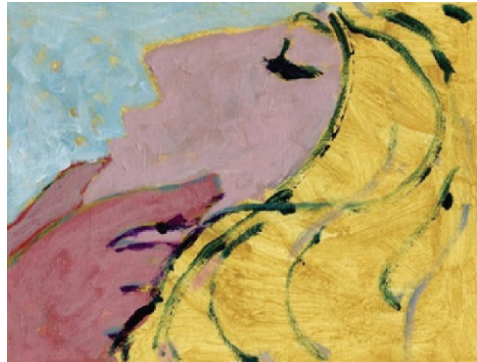


As a Master of Illustration and Painting, from stylized realism to very abstract, with Van Gogh-like colors and shapes, orderly Mondrian compositions, and Stewart Davis’s modern style, Mr. McDaniel does

it with talent and a twist on American, European, and now Romanian subjects.

Note: Many thanks to Ion and Lidia Lazu [17] which contributed to this article with ideas discussed on Skype.

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**Paintings - acrylic on paper
by Jerry W. McDaniel -
inspired by Blaga's poems**

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