

HIDDEN GREEN BY MIKLÓS ERDÉLY

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Erdély spread hay over approximately four-fifths of the 12 × 5 m floor of the Budaörs Cultural Center. He left the remaining one-fifth near the entrance uncovered. The door, illuminated by a spotlight, was painted black along with the adjacent area in order to prevent reflections of the spotlight. The space was dominated by a homogeneous green light.

About two meters from the door, at the edge of the hay, a small desk and a chair stood concealed by a low folding screen. Visitors could sit down, reflect on the exhibition, writing in green pencil on white paper by the green light of a small desk lamp. On further exploration, one would also discover a broom and an empty white circle in the hay.

All of this, and especially the green light, was meant to place the visitor into a state of reverie, which was also fostered by the elongated shape of the objects: the corn broom leaning against the wall had a specially lengthened handle, and the comblike object in the middle of the room was taller than a person, at 2.20 m. This object consisted of a wood pulp board, 1.5 × 1.5 m in size, resting on about 50 wooden slats that were 10 mm wide and deep. The board nailed to the slats was wrapped in tracing paper and also stuffed with paper, which created the effect of a floating, puffy cloud supported by the slats.

The full width of the back wall of the room opposite the entrance was covered with corrugated cardboard, which was placed at a slight

angle to the wall, like an awning, and did not reach all the way down to the hay-covered floor. Some hay was piled up on top, evoking [the mood] of a feeding station in the woods and allowing one to crouch underneath. Crouching under the awning and looking up, one would see a clean green line of felt illuminated by white light, like a horizon line running along the edge of the corrugated cardboard meeting the wall. The thin green felt strip with the white light had a sobering effect: it indicated an opening, a window from this bubble of reverie. The green of the strip was an objectified green, unlike the atmospheric green filling the hall.

The white circle with green reflex color and a diameter of 1.5–2.0 m, which was left blank in the hay, had the magical effect of a mirror or pond. The artist would occasionally sweep the fallen [stalks of] hay out of the circle, using the specially extended broom placed there for this purpose.

When asked to give some pointers on how to interpret his exhibition in retrospect, Miklós Erdély responded that this environment was a figuration that appeared to him instantaneously, like a vision.

Erdély identified the supported cloud as being identical with the theoretical concept of new art that he [Erdély] used to harbor: brick by brick, the latest scientific worldview had slowly erected a buttress under the balloon, meant to express the irrational nature of art floating above things. It follows from Gödel's Theorem—and the object with its support also alludes to this—that any statement rests upon an infinite number of presuppositions and is, as such, unprovable. It is these presuppositions and prejudices that need to be uncovered.

In hindsight, Erdély would be happy to have written “Gödel” on the cloud, because these Gödelian ideas were already at work in him at the time of *Hidden Green*, if less consciously than later on.

He was quite familiar with Russell's paradox of set theory (which he instructed the audience at one of his lectures to recite each night as an evening prayer, claiming that the way it would gnaw at their everyday rationalism would nearly amount to piety).

Gödel's Theorem, in fact, resolves this paradox by proving that such paradoxes do not eliminate logic but rather follow necessarily from any type of logic.

One cannot create an axiomatic system without inconsistency, and the inconsistency that necessarily arises within an axiomatic system can only be resolved in another system.

Hidden Green strove to liberate color from political encumbrances. Colors are inevitably compromised, and whenever one deals with colors, the associations surrounding them like a halo will always brush up against each other.

The jury did, in fact, ask what this green symbolized. Erdély said green was the color of hope, as it had always been, and this was not simply evasion on his part. Even though he did not know Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope at the time, he would happily recognize later that Hidden Green was a simple symbol of what Ernst Bloch stated in his philosophy of hope.

Ernst Bloch suggests that art is made to endure through the hope it secretly holds, by the fact that it always refers to what is unrealized and therefore transcends reality. In this respect, Hidden Green may symbolize art as such.

In terms of this interpretation, the white circle and the act of keeping it clean are tributes to pure rationalism. This models a conviction that art can be reached through the scientific moral of rationalism.

Science has marked its limits and has come to contradict itself at a number of points. This requires the pure consistency that only science holds in our world. The romantic notion of art posited confusion of the senses and intoxicated intuition as the methods of art. Erdély claims that no matter how much artists give themselves over to instinct, they still need to retain the rule of reason in certain ways.

Once again, Erdély undermines prevailing expectations. He posits that any artistic behavior becomes a role: both traditional and contemporary artists try to delineate and define their style and sphere of interest early in their career, positioning themselves in a type of role and then representing themselves accordingly.

As he says, whoever has any openness toward the transcendent will not accept the status of being attached to a role, this attire easily accepted by others. One cannot wear a costume to the last judgment; an area directed upward needs to be kept clean, as if naked, just in case, whether the transcendent aspects of the human being exist or not. The sedimented roles need to be brushed off it.

The mystics of old used to try to protect their nudity by withdrawing from society like hermits, sitting on a rock without drinking or eating. Society immediately accepted this as their status as hermits.

This has been replaced by a more intricate solution that strives to cancel out meaning both in work and in life. It allows various references

to grow but plays them up against each other, resulting in a saturation of meaning that eliminates the sole validity of any one reference. Since this new sophistication wants to free itself from the meanings it cannot prevent from emerging, its only recourse is to have them cancel each other out. Unless this intention is active, we become captive to our role even if we are vagrants or hermits.

If canceling one's roles still passes for a role of some sort, then one needs to find yet another method to tackle this situation (the entirety of all these elements): the cancellation of meaning is an infinite process.

TRANSLATED BY KATALIN ORBÁN